

THE DEATH OF THE COMMON READER—IRVING HOWE

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*Fred Barnes on
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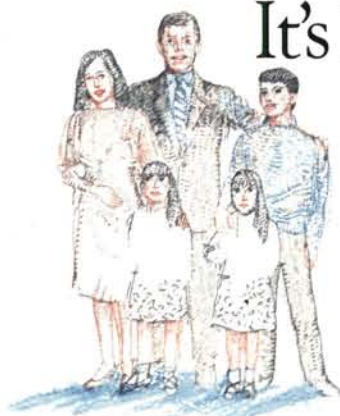
*Margaret Carlson on
Tony Coelho's Banditry*



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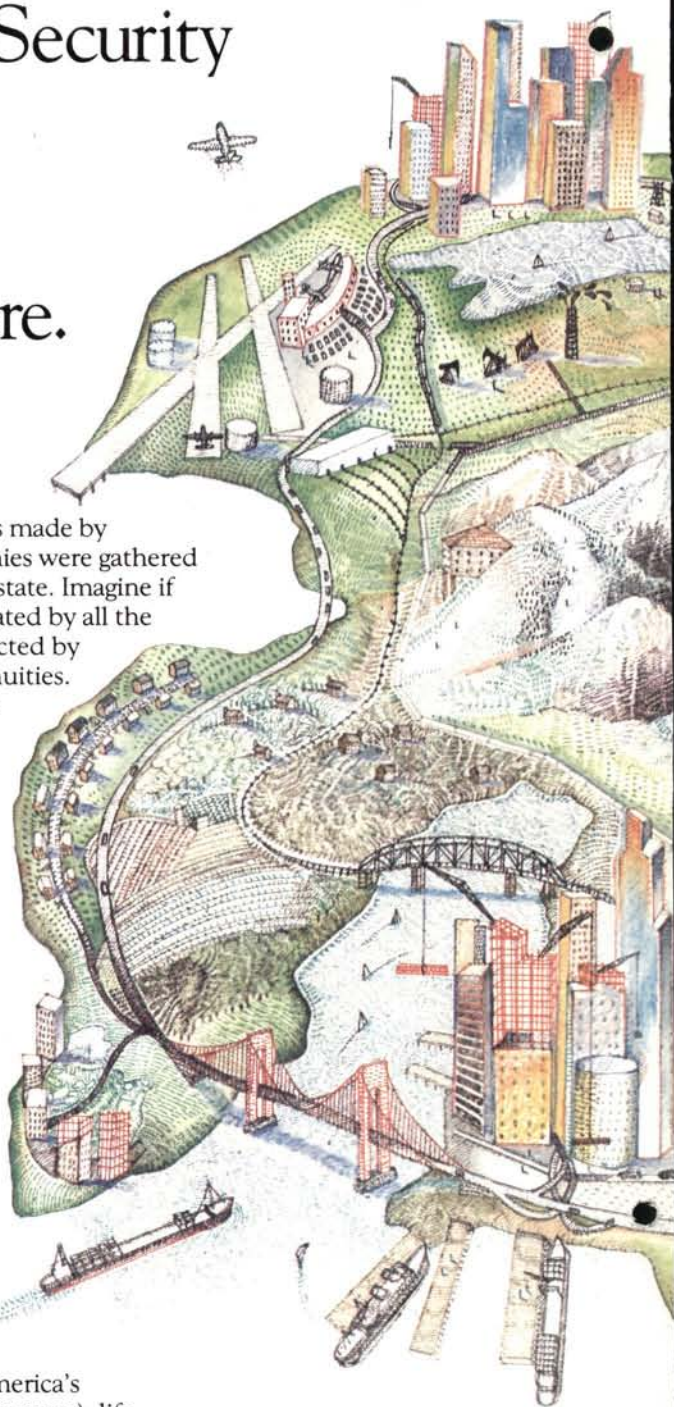
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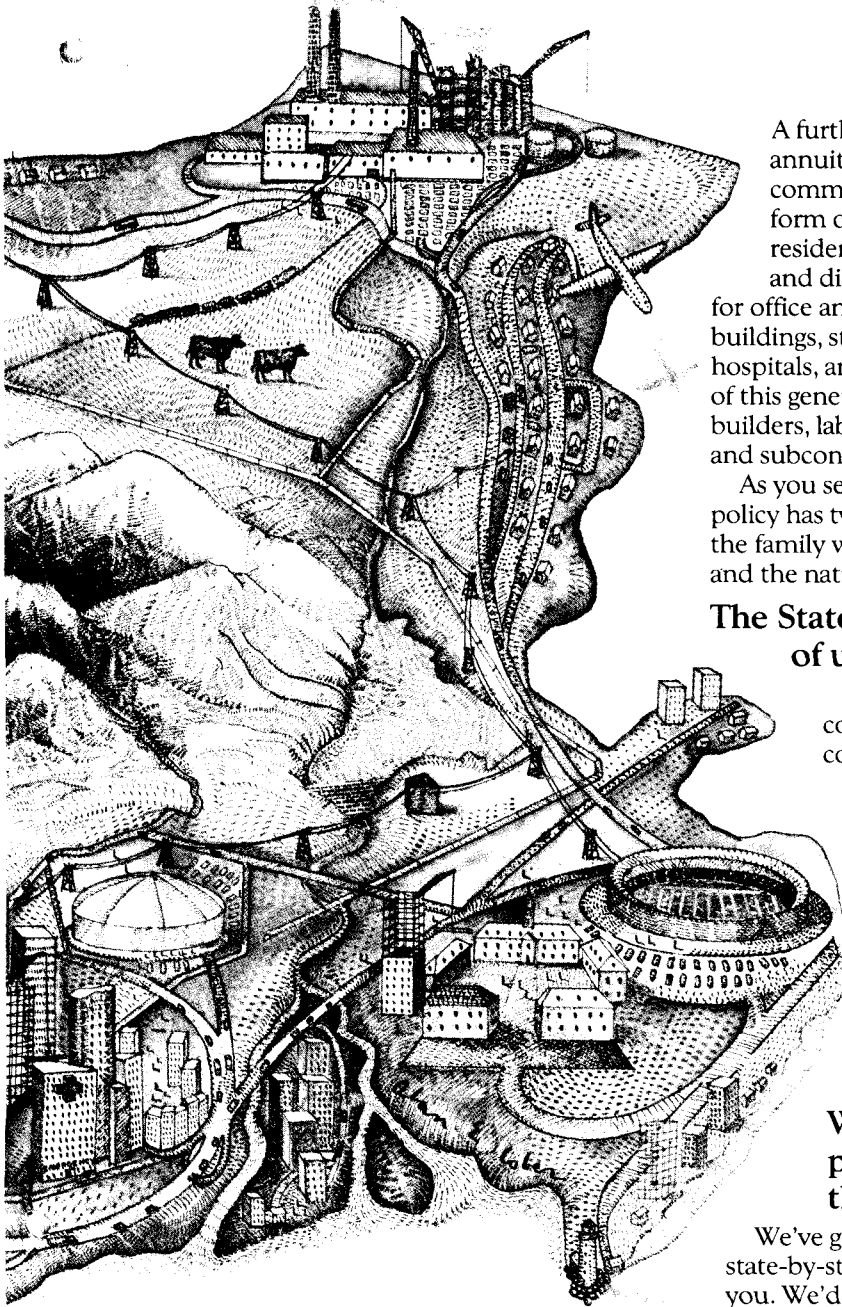
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FROM WASHINGTON

People's Republic

This is finals week in China, so here's an essay question:

Corazon Aquino, Mohandas Gandhi, Mikhail Gorbachev, Patrick Henry, Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Mao Zedong, Karl Marx, Henry David Thoreau, Voltaire. The names on this alphabetical list have something important in common. Discuss.

That would've been a tough one until about six weeks ago, but for any self-respecting sophomore at Beijing U. it would now be a cinch. The answer, of course, is that all of these illustrious figures have been specifically and repeatedly cited by the students in Tiananmen Square as inspiration for their astounding, audacious deeds.

It's a wildly eclectic pantheon, yet it makes perfect sense in the context of what has become arguably the largest spontaneous movement of civic protest in the history of the world. The names make a stirring procession: Voltaire the skeptical enemy of intolerance; Henry the firebrand of insurrectionary sacrifice (GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH was inscribed on more than one student banner); Thoreau the inventor of civil disobedience; Marx the bookish prophet of revolution; Lincoln the democratic emancipator; Mao the founder of the People's Republic; Gandhi the practitioner of non-violent mass resistance to tyranny, and King his American disciple and fellow martyr; Aquino the icon of Asian "people power"; and Gorbachev the champion of political liberalization and embattled dismantler of bureaucratic totalitarianism. I might quibble that Mao does not belong in the company of so many friends of freedom. But it's not my list, it's the students'; and for them the Great Helmsman is an emblem of Chinese patriotism. They carry his picture not only as a badge of national pride but also as an earnest of their determination to reform the system rather than overthrow it. Turning Mao Zedong into a symbol of gradualist democratization is only the least of the miracles they have performed.

In the dizzying cascade of events in

China every day is a month, every week a year. It took just five days for an acorn to become a forest, as 2,000 hunger-striking students grew to a rapturous throng of a million citizens of Beijing. Throughout the country at least ten million people, maybe 20 million, took to the streets, all without the slightest trace of violence. Three days ago as I write, army units were headed for Beijing, and it seemed inevitable that the protest would end in gunfire and blood. Now it seems equally inevitable that it will end in some sort of victory—at a minimum, the fall of Prime Minister Li Peng, who, by declaring martial law and calling out the army just as the students were about to end their hunger strike, galvanized the opposition anew, split the ruling elites, and delegitimized himself beyond repair.

The events in China are the culmination—one of many culminations—of an extraordinary, decade-long game of leapfrog between the world's two Communist giants. Deng Xiaoping's sweeping economic reforms, starting in 1979, brought fast-growing if uneven prosperity to China, throwing the Soviet Union's economic failures into sharper relief. Inspired in part by Deng's example, Gorbachev launched his own program of reform, first in the economic sphere and then, far more boldly, in the political sphere. *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union—especially the wholesale expansion of freedom of speech and the press, the unprecedented spectacle of contested and consequential elections, and the beginnings of representative institutions and the rule of law—has in turn inspired the Chinese. Totalitarianism may be dead and Leninism may be dying, but the dialectic of history has never been in better working order.

On a less abstract level, it was Gorbachev's visit to China that enabled the students—whose demonstrations, some of them as large as 150,000 people, had been going on for a month—to turn their movement into a colossal popular uprising. "I come to Beijing and you have a revolution!" Gorbachev boisterously jested to his opposite number, President Yang Shangkun—who, we may assume, smiled wanly. (Yang is one of Li's hard-line allies.) In the presence of the hero of *glasnost*, and under the eyes of the 1,200 foreign journalists he brought in his train, the Chinese authorities could not afford to clamp down. "Some activities on the agenda of the Sino-Soviet summit that attracted worldwide attention had to be canceled, greatly damaging China's international image and prestige," said Li in his speech announcing martial law two days after Gorbachev's departure. He was exactly wrong, of course. Though the prestige of Li's government has been destroyed, that of the people of China has never been higher. Bliss it is in

this dawn to be alive, but to be Chinese must be very heaven.

The tide rolling out of China should sweep away what remains of the notion that ordinary people in poor countries with limited democratic traditions do not care about civil liberties. This idea has proved false almost everywhere it has been tested. The laboratories include societies as diverse as India, South Korea, Spain, Portugal, and, in recent months, Panama, the Soviet Union, and now China. Soviet voters took every chance they were offered to elect candidates who stood for freedom of thought and conscience, with the result that Andrei Sakharov, Roy Medvedev, and Vitaly Korotich, the editor of *Ogonyok* magazine, all have seats in the new Soviet legislature that begins meeting this week. "Democracy" has been the cry of the Chinese students. What they mean by this is less clear than what they don't mean, but their one persistent demand (apart from an end to corruption) has been for freedom of the press.

Another tattered axiom is that Gandhian nonviolence cannot work in Communist dictatorships backed by guns and tanks. Poland is one refutation of that; China, wholly different in scale and tradition, is now another. But the workability of nonviolence in such places seems to be conditioned on the abandonment of systematic state terror and the passing from the scene of the founding Great Leader. It's beginning to look like a pretty safe bet that post-Castro Cuba, for example, will plunge briskly into democratization.

For the Communist world 1989 is a historic year of liberation and euphoric upheaval, the way 1968 was in the West (and in part of the East, too—*glasnost* and Tiananmen Square are the fulfillment of Dubcek's promise, broken by Russian tanks and still denied to his fellow Czechs). In Washington, by dismal contrast, this is just another year in an era of positively Brezhnevian stagnation. President Bush—that decent, empty, cautious apparatchik—is pathetically unable to rise to the grandeur of the moment. His press secretary's answer to *glasnost* is to pout that Gorbachev is a "drugstore cowboy" who engages in "public relations." A million Chinese carry a model of the Statue of Liberty through the streets of Beijing, and the American secretary of state issues a call for "stability." Bush himself has belatedly made some of the right noises, but without eloquence, without imagination, without passion. As Vice President Quayle said the other day, by way of mangling the slogan of the United Negro College Fund: "What a waste it is to lose one's mind, or not to have a mind." Or much of a heart either.

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JUN 13 1989

- 4 TRB FROM WASHINGTON **PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC** China starts living up to its name.
- 6 CORRESPONDENCE Soviet democratic history, gay rights, &c.
- 7 THE EDITORS **OUR CHIP HAS COME IN** If you think communism is in trouble now, wait until another few million personal computers roll off the assembly line.
- 8 NOTEBOOK Wall Street's revenge, Baker's speech, &c.
- 9 MARK HOSENBALL **DEAR MANNY** Manuel Noriega as Reagan administration officials knew him: a staunch ally in the war on drugs (and a darn good-looking guy).
- 10 MORTON M. KONDRACKE **GET ME REWRITE** How George Bush should stage manage the global war for hearts and minds.
- 14 FRED BARNES **MUSICAL CHAIRS** A guide to the post-Wright leadership shuffle.
- 15 ALAN BURDICK **HYPE TIDE** Get ready for another summer of fun, sun, and grossly distorted reports of syringes in the sand.
- 18 MARGARET CARLSON **FALLEN ANGEL** When Tony Coelho was young, he wanted to be a priest. He settled instead for a life of passing around the collection plate.
- 21 ROBERT KAGAN **BALLOT BLOCKS** Impediments to fair elections in Nicaragua won't go away without a little help from its neighbors.
- 23 ALAN TONELSON AND CHRISTOPHER LAYNE **DIVORCE, ALLIANCE-STYLE** How to keep West Germany happy, prevent a rupture in NATO, and save the U.S. \$30 billion a year in the process.
- 26 STANLEY KAUFFMANN **ON FILMS: CUT TO FIT** Beth Henley's soggy *Miss Firecracker*; some good gags in *See No Evil*, *Hear No Evil*.
- 28 IRVING HOWE **THE TREASON OF THE CRITICS** The common reader no longer counts for our literary critics, who only write for each other.
- 31 ROBERT J. SAMUELSON **AMERICA FOR SALE?** Foreign investment inspires great alarm or else hope—and plenty of books. The truth is, it won't destroy America or save it.
- 34 PENELOPE AUSTIN **POEM** *Heedless*
- 35 EDMUND S. MORGAN **THE FOUNDING CONSERVATIVE** *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* by Drew R. McCoy
- 38 LAWRENCE FREEDMAN **ADVENTURES IN THE BOMB TRADE** *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* by John Newhouse; *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* by McGeorge Bundy
- 40 TOM LECLAIR **FEATURE FICTIONS** *If the River Was Whiskey* by T. Coraghessan Boyle
- 42 WASHINGTON DIARIST **NERVOUS TICS**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Soviet Blank Spots

To the editors:

S. Frederick Starr ("A Usable Past," May 15) presents much valid information about what he calls "Russia's democratic roots." Yet he fails to discuss the crowning glory, the irrefutable proof, of Russia's late-19th- and early-20th-century democratic inclinations—the free, multiparty elections of November 25, 1917. These historic but long-forgotten elections, which Lenin tried unsuccessfully to cancel, selected the all-Russian Constituent Assembly—whose makeup, despite Lenin's de facto dictatorship since the November 7 coup d'état, was less than 25 percent Bolshevik. Nor does Starr reveal the brutal way in which Lenin terminated this popular Russian parliament on January 19, 1918, during its very first (and only) meeting. It was then that his militia forced permanent adjournment of the Constituent Assembly—whose anti-Bolshevik character, according to Lenin in 1920, helped "prove to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be broken up."

As Starr accurately recounts, Mikhail Gorbachev has called for the filling in of "blank spots" in Soviet history. But one monumental blank spot that "Mr. Glasnost" has refused steadfastly to acknowledge is this story of the birth and the death of the popular Russian parliament.

JIM GUIRARD JR.
Washington, D.C.

Hollywood's Goldwyn Age

To the editors:

I was repelled by Frank Rich's venal and narrowly conceived review of Neal Gabler's and A. Scott Berg's books on the Jews who made Hollywood—or "schmucks" as they were dubbed in your sleazy cover title come-on ("Gilt by Association," May 8). Rich, in his disgust and endless contempt for Louis B. Mayer, Samuel Goldwyn et al., presents these men without providing a context for their extraordinary accomplishment. Why is there no recognition of the vision that motivated them and without which they couldn't have given birth to "the golden age of Hollywood," as we now call it? Why no insight into how their Jewish roots, while often rejected, were still what nourished the high stan-

dards, the moral impetus, the pursuit of excellence that brought together the greatest writers and other artists of the world? How come these men with no culture created the most influential and most beloved mass culture of our time?

ROBERTA HODES
New York, New York

Gay Rights

To the editors:

The Tenants Harbor Diarist speaks with alarming naïveté on the subject of Maine's proposed legislation against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation ("Provincial Wisdom," May 15). He cites the murder of a gay man by "a couple of homophobic youths" as if it were an isolated incident. But federal statistics have recently revealed that gay people are the most frequent targets of bias-motivated violence in the United States. "It's against the law to murder anyone in Maine," he says. That's true, but it misses the point. Anti-discrimination legislation gives victims of gay-bashing a means of obtaining the kind of protection that others take for granted, and helps make it a little more likely that murderers of gay people will not be dismissed as "troubled youths" who do not need to be punished very severely.

Such a law would protect not only those who are gay by their own definition, but also anyone perceived as gay and attacked on that basis. How many times you've had sex with someone, what kind of sex it was, and your economic level (really, the Diarist should know better!) are irrelevant. This law would also protect heterosexuals from unequal treatment by, say, a gay employer. "Sexual orientation" does not refer only to gays. It applies to everyone.

PHILIP BOCKMAN
*Gay & Lesbian Alliance
Against Defamation
New York, New York*

To the editors:

The Tenants Harbor Diarist concludes that it is "baffling" that the Democratic Party supports gay rights. Aside from the fact that he misses the more obvious reason—that AIDS and a resurgence of anti-gay prejudice is solidifying a large community whose votes cannot be taken for granted—his concern is more deeply troubling. Have we become so cynical that a political party should only adopt a cause if it guarantees a net gain in votes? Have the Diarist's political sensibilities be-

come so tainted by pollsters and consultants that he cannot understand, let alone applaud, the idea that a party may adopt a controversial stance merely because the issue (in this case the extension to gay people of equal rights under the law) squarely presents a dispute between justice and decency versus prejudice and hatred?

GLENN GORDON
New York, New York

The Jury Speaks

To the editors:

As foreman of the Lisa Grimshaw jury, I read with personal interest William Saletan and Nancy Watzman's article concerning the increasing use of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder "syndromes" as defenses in criminal trials ("Marcus Welby, J.D.," April 17). In that piece, there is a reference to the Grimshaw case that contains an instance of careless reporting. The authors state that after hearing contradictory testimony from two expert witnesses, we, the jury, were "perplexed," and resolved our perplexity by convicting Grimshaw of manslaughter instead of murder. This arrogant assumption in no way reflects the reality of our deliberations and, in fact, cheapens the efforts of 12 conscientious people fully cognizant of their collective responsibility.

It is important to note that this jury was sequestered from the very moment of its selection, and the members had no sense of the precedent-setting nature of the case. Based on the "preponderance of the evidence," we found Lisa Grimshaw to be a battered person of long standing, and that in June 1985 she suffered from a phenomenon that left a "reasonable doubt" as to the presence of malice, a requirement under the law for a murder conviction. The truth would have been better served had Saletan and Watzman taken the time to check their assumptions with any of the 12 citizens who had direct knowledge of those deliberations.

ROBERT D. LOHBAUER
Lee, Massachusetts

Washingtoniana

To the editors:

It seems as if every time you folks take to writing about George Washington you bobble matters of fact. Last year it was incorrectly asserted that Thomas Jefferson wrote the Farewell Address. Now Henry Fairlie errs in informing us that Washington appointed John Marshall as chief justice ("Spurious

continued on page 41

JUNE 12, 1989

OUR CHIP HAS COME IN

Apparently Orwell got it wrong. Or, at least, half wrong: he understood that new information technologies would profoundly affect the direction of history, but his forecast of the direction was off by around 180 degrees. In 1984, TV cameras and colossal (low-tech) databases served mainly to tighten state control over speech and thought, to strip the individual of power. But in 1989 (and 1988, and 1987), information technology has had the opposite effect. Witness Russia and, now, China. Whatever has happened in China by the time you read this—whether the forces of liberalization or of reaction have won the day—the Chinese are, in the long run, squarely on the road toward greater freedom. Indeed, it is beginning to look as if, in the information age, there is no other road.

We are not talking only, or even mainly, about satellite dishes. Much has been said about the role of TV in China's remarkable springtime adventure, quite a bit of it true: yes, the knowledge that the world was watching probably made the government reluctant to crack down on student protesters early on; yes, TV had helped blow the winds of *glasnost*, not to mention genuine Western democracy, eastward in the first place; yes, TV helped the demonstrations proliferate, from Beijing to Shanghai to Hong Kong—almost as if masses of Asians were replicating themselves via satellite. So, yes, TV may, in some significant but still unclear way, load the dice in favor of democracy. On the other hand, as the Chinese showed by pulling the plug on Dan Rather, TV is susceptible to centralized control. It is becoming less so, as cameras and satellite dishes become smaller and cheaper; but for now, TV is not intrinsically a technology of the individual.

More fundamentally democratizing, in the decades ahead, will be the personal computer and ancillary technologies. The modern economy, everyone now knows, is fueled by information; as economic development proceeds, the portion of the work force that makes its living by manipulating information, or by making or maintaining machines that manipulate information, grows inexorably. To compete economically, a nation must give its workers—its people—information machines that are by

nature decentralizing and empowering: computers, printers, modems, fax machines. Through them, people gain sources of information—and *become* sources of information—that are hard for the government to control. The fundamental myth of totalitarian communism (that the people all agree) collides with the crucial reality of capitalist democracy (that they don't) and yields the dilemma now facing leaders in Moscow and Beijing: let the people think for themselves and speak their minds, and recognize the diversity of their opinions—or smell your economy rot.

Of course, history was on the side of democracy long before the microchip was invented a few decades ago by two entrepreneurial American scientists. (Marx, like Orwell, was one for two: yes, history is headed inexorably toward the vindication of a specific political philosophy; no, it's not your philosophy.) Capitalism has always been the most productive economic system around, and its freedom of enterprise has always seemed to imply a certain freedom of thought and expression, though some repressive capitalist nations have succeeded in keeping the connection between the two quite tenuous. What the microelectronic revolution has done is strengthen this connection. For despots, the cruel logic runs like this: your economy cannot compete unless it is a decentralized and free one; once decentralized, it still cannot be very competitive unless it is riddled with small, cheap, potent information processors, each capable of serving as a printing press, a database, a transmitter, a receiver; once your economy is so riddled, your society is so riddled; once your society is so riddled, hang on to your hat.

The remarkable thing is that this logic is just beginning to kick in, and already the ferment is considerable. Though the newly vibrant and diverse Soviet press is fueled partly by personal computers, these machines remain rare and precious things in Russia. Indeed, if they weren't, all the news about Orwell being published overground would barely matter; once home computers are common, any body of writing, with or without the Party's seal of approval, can reproduce wildly, via laser



printer or modem. In China, too, the information revolution is young by Western standards. In fact, the recent upheaval has been a striking testament to the power of low-tech organizing: bicycle messengers and posters, leaflets and word of mouth (albeit amplified by loud-speaker) have coordinated the actions of a million people. This is the frightening thing from the point of view of aspiring Chinese dictators: of the information revolution's one-two punch—TV and widely decentralized computerization—only the first punch has been delivered, and already the place is a shambles.

In spite of the foregoing, there are several reasons not to break out the champagne. First, there is a certain amount of evidence that doesn't fit neatly into sunny, technologically deterministic forecasts. Dictators like Manuel Noriega have resolutely ignored television's damning images, and capitalist tyrannies, as in South Africa, have successfully squelched them—and kept a lid on internal dissent. For the time being, at least, this is doable. Still, the smart money says that as IBM, Apple, and NEC continue to infiltrate the working world, and TV technology undergoes further miniaturization, the separation of political and economic liberalization will become increasingly untenable.

A second reason not to celebrate democracy's world championship prematurely is that democracy is a funny thing. When it works, it is clearly superior to any other form of government. But it seems only to work easily in select environments (principally, so far, northern and western ones). When democracy and capitalism suddenly appear in cultures without a history of both, turbulence can ensue. There is no reason to expect the miracle of modern technology to change that. Around the world, the will of the people will almost certainly find greater and more frequent expression, but there is no reason to bet that this expression will assume the orderly form that makes Americans so partial to it. (There are senses, in fact, in which the information age *complicates* the functioning of a mature democracy, such as ours.)

One can imagine, then, a world in which sporadic, destabilizing thrusts of popular will fight an ever more violent battle with repression. And remember: the communications revolution has brought blessings for the repressor as well as the repressed; computers do have the *potential* for effecting totalitarian control. If the government of a modern economy wanted to centrally collect the various computerized information about each citizen—every long-distance phone call, every book bought on credit, every hotel stayed in, every videotape rented—it could fairly cheaply come to know a disturbing amount about everyone. In America, the people don't *want* the government to have that sort of access, so it doesn't. The hope is that increasingly, other governments, too, will find it hard to do things their people don't want them to do.

Still, there is a chance—a slim one, it seems, but a chance—that Orwell will be vindicated in the end, that the darker side of information technology will win out. This is the second good news/bad news joke brought to us by the seeming disintegration of modern communism. The first is that once the Iron Curtain begins to crumble, everyone realizes that a bipolar world had the virtue, at least, of being simple; the

fluidity of geopolitics in a post-cold war, multipolar era may in some ways be frightening. The second joke is that totalitarian communism could well crumble only to be replaced by something not necessarily better: an enduring chaos, in which individual liberty doesn't clearly prevail and yet isn't systematically and quietly stifled, but rather is periodically beaten down only to rise up again—an ongoing, high-tech battle between good and evil.

Maybe it is just as well to go ahead and have some champagne after all. Once the latest party is over, there will be much work to do.

NOTEBOOK

PLAIN SPEAKING: James Baker has raised a perfectly ridiculous storm. His speech to AIPAC's annual convention in Washington was full of fair, true, and constructive statements about the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Many of Israel's supporters in the audience, according to Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, were "stunned and dismayed" to hear the secretary of state address these words to the government of Israel: "forswear annexation; stop settlement activity; allow schools to reopen; reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights." Baker also urged Israel to abandon "the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel." There should be nothing controversial about these remarks. After all, if Israel does not abandon the Greater Israel idea and forswear annexation and stop settlement activity, there will be no peace, period; and it is cynical, in the way that the Likud sometimes is cynical, to suggest otherwise. The Likud may need a Greater Israel for its satisfaction, but Israel does not. Moreover, Baker's animadversions on the failure of the Palestinians to act politically, to choose diplomacy over violence, were equally blunt and brutal, calling on them to take the Israeli government up on its proposal for elections in the territories. Israel's friends should recognize the secretary's speech for what it was: plain-speaking about the essential requirements for a political solution. Baker said exactly nothing that casts this country's friendship with Israel into doubt. And surely plain-speaking is preferable to sweet-talking.

TRAVELIN' LIGHT: There's something strange going on in the mind of Michael Dukakis. The worse things seem to get in Massachusetts, the more he seems to gear up to run for president in 1992. Wealthy supporters of the Duke are now raising \$100,000 to finance his travels (and speeches, naturally) around the world, perhaps to the Soviet Union. That has to be a more attractive prospect than staying at home. "The state can't pay bills it owes hospitals and nursing homes," Robert Turner wrote in the *Boston Globe* the day the story of the Duke's travel fund broke. "Deteriorating roads are being ignored. Eligible students are being denied admission to state colleges for the first time. Dukakis's pet program of universal health care is in danger." Stump

speeches in Des Moines and Moscow won't help Massachusetts out of its \$600 million deficit. That's one act that the Duke shouldn't take out on the road.

NO DISPLEASING SOME PEOPLE:

APRIL JOB GROWTH EASED DECISIVELY, STIRRING CONCERN

—*New York Times*, May 6

Jobless rate increase seen as good news

—*USA Today*, May 8

(thanks to Mark Frankel, Los Angeles, California)

NO SWEAT:

Junk Underwriters Sweat Over Huge RJR Issue Today

—*Wall Street Journal*, May 12

Record \$4-Billion RJR Bond Offering a Sellout

—*Los Angeles Times*, same day

(thanks to Jacob Shuster, Los Angeles, California)

LOCAL NEWS: We are pleased to announce that Robert Kuttner, TNR's economics correspondent, has won the John Hancock award for excellence in business and financial writing in the columnist category. Congratulations are also due to Richard Howard, our poetry editor, who has been awarded the Academy of American Poets' \$20,000 fellowship for "distinguished poetic achievement."

Old love letters from Uncle Sam.

DEAR MANNY

By Mark Hosenball

Two months ago Attorney General Dick Thornburgh held an elaborate press conference to announce the results of Operation Polar Cap, a round-up of cocaine money-launderers. Officials announced that the coup de grace of this DEA/FBI/IRS/Customs sting was to be the arrest, by Manuel Noriega's Panamanian Defense Forces, of a Medellín cartel luminary who had been lured to a bank in Panama City by American undercover agents. The suspect turned up on schedule and the bank was surrounded by Noriega's Finest. But—surprise—somehow, at the end of the day, he had managed to escape.

You might think that the United States would have known by then not to trust any institution linked with Panama's leader. But officials in the Drug Enforcement Administration and other U.S. agencies have proved

remarkably willing to give Noriega the benefit of the doubt. Stories about high-level drug trafficking in Panama were discussed during congressional hearings on the Canal Treaty in February 1978, several months before DEA head Peter Bensinger first wrote to thank Noriega for his support in the war on drugs. And one of the last of many thank-you notes penned by John Lawn, one of Bensinger's successors, was dated May 27, 1987—long after Noriega's involvement in drug-running was exposed by Seymour Hersh on the front page of the *New York Times*, and only a few months before Noriega was indicted on U.S. drug-trafficking charges. Now that it looks as if Noriega and the United States have agreed to go their separate ways, it seems only fitting to go over some of the high points of the DEA's long and friendly correspondence with the man lovingly referred to by his countrymen as "Pineapple-head." What follows are excerpts from letters released during Senate hearings last year.

December 14, 1978

Teniente Coronel Manuel Antonio Noriega
Comandante De G-2 Del Estado
Mayor de la Guardia Nacional de La
Republica de Panama

Dear Colonel Noriega:

As the New Year approaches, I want you to know that the Drug Enforcement Administration very much appreciates all of the support and cooperation which you have extended to our agency during the last year.

The professionalism of your agency is well respected by us, as is your leadership.

Please know my colleagues join me in wishing you well and thanking you for the excellent efforts which have contributed substantially to the ongoing battle against drugs which the international law enforcement community is embarked upon.

My very best regards and best wishes for a very happy and successful New Year.

Sincerely,
Peter B. Bensinger
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

March 16, 1984

General Manuel Noriega
Jefatura Guardia Nacional
República de Panama
E. S. D.

Dear General Noriega:

... Your long-standing support of the Drug Enforcement Administration is greatly appreciated. Country Attache Bramble has advised me of no small number of instances in which you have lent your personal support. It is very meaningful to us.

Thank you very much for the autographed photograph. I have had it framed and it is proudly displayed in my office.

I hope to be able soon to reciprocate your gracious hospitality. Best regards.

Sincerely,
Francis M. Mullen, Jr.
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

May 8, 1986

General Manuel Antonio Noriega
Commander in Chief
Panama Defense Forces
Panama, Republic of Panama

Dear General Noriega:

... I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my deep appreciation for the vigorous anti-drug trafficking policy that you have adopted, which is reflected in the numerous expulsions from Panama of accused traffickers, the large seizures of cocaine and precursor chemicals that have occurred in Panama and the eradication of marijuana cultivations in Panamanian territory.

Regarding the question of attacking the profits accumulated by drug traffickers, I look forward to the day when all governments develop the means to systematically identify and seize those illegal profits and drug trafficking starts becoming a self-defeating enterprise. . . .

It was a pleasure having the opportunity to visit with you personally in Buenos Aires.

Sincerely,
John C. Lawn
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

May 27, 1987

General Manuel Antonio Noriega
Commander-in-Chief
Panamanian Defense Forces
Republic of Panama

Dear General Noriega:

Once again the United States Drug Enforcement Administration and the enforcement authorities of the Republic of Panama have joined efforts to strike an effective blow against the drug traffickers who plague us all. As you know, the recently concluded Operation Pices was enormously successful: many millions of dollars and many thousands of pounds of drugs have been taken from the drug traffickers and international money launderers.

Your personal commitment to Operation Pices and the competent, professional, and tireless efforts of other officials in the Republic of Panama were essential to the final positive outcome of this investigation. Drug traffickers around the world are now on notice that the proceeds and profits of their illegal ventures are not welcome in Panama. . . .

I look forward to our continued efforts together. DEA

has long welcomed our close association and we stand ready to proceed jointly against international drug traffickers whenever the opportunity arises.

Sincerely,
John C. Lawn
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

MARK HOSENBALL is a reporter in the Washington bureau of the London *Sunday Times*.

How to win the war of words with Gorbo.

GET ME REWRITE

By Morton M. Kondracke

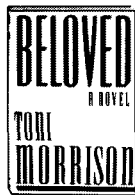
Off in China and on television screens around the world, one of the most astounding dramas in human history was taking place—a nonviolent struggle to transform the world's biggest country from a dictatorship into a democracy—and the best the president of the United States could say was, "I don't want to be gratuitous in giving advice, but I would encourage restraint." Under pressure from a press corps yearning for poetry and drama to match the occasion, President Bush dug a little deeper and let loose with the thought that the students in Tiananmen Square should "continue to fight for what you believe in, stand up for what you believe in, but beyond that, I cannot go."

Why could he not have said, "China, listen to your children. They are not trying to destroy your country, but to fulfill your own dreams of progress. You will not lose face if you heed them. You will gain the awe and respect of the world"?

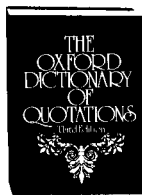
It's as a result of missed opportunities like this that Chinese students have picked Mikhail Gorbachev as the symbol of their aspirations, in spite of the fact that he called them "hotheads" and did no more than recommend negotiations that would serve "the interests of the people and the Party." It's as a result of other missed American opportunities that Gorbachev—the unelected boss of a collapsing empire and former agriculture commissar who still can't feed his people—is the toast of Europe and can be nominated by the *New York Times* as the man most humans would call on if intergalactic visitors dropped by and said, "Take us to your leader."

Bush aides are furious with the American press for allegedly turning world politics into a "p.r. game," for "buying Gorbachev's line," for ignoring or trivializing the new ideas they say are present in various Bush foreign policy speeches, and for seemingly wanting the new administration to take risky policy flyers that the press will surely criticize if they crash. Administration officials are also mad at Gorbachev for using under-

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Jack Kerouac

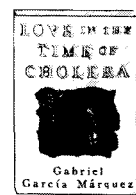
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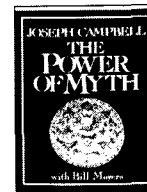
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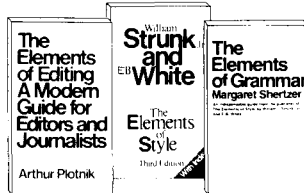
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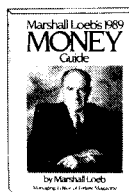
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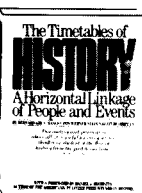
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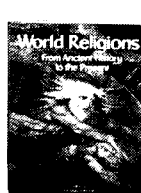
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handed stunts—usually, token promises of military cuts—to gain world attention. At a loss for ways to trump him, the Bush camp has been trying—in the style of an American political campaign—to drive up Gorbachev's negatives with criticism. In the process, though, the Bush people end up sounding like the Michael Dukakis campaign ads that jibed counterproductively at "Bush's packagers."

There is some merit to the administration's complaints about the American press. Gorbachev, for example, did not get the criticism he deserved when Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze suggested the Soviets would violate the INF treaty if NATO modernized its short-range missile force in Europe. Bush aides are also not all wrong in saying there is more to Bush's speeches than what's highlighted in news reports. "The press has been demanding 'vision,' " said one senior official. "So then we produce a series of 'visions,' and what does the press focus on? Details." When Bush vowed at Texas A&M University to move America's strategy toward the Soviet Union "beyond containment" and toward "integration" of the Soviet Union into the world community, news reports focused mainly on his offer to lift trade restrictions and on his rearming of Eisenhower's proposal for "open skies." And on May 21 at Boston University, Bush declared—"for the first time," aides say—unequivocal support for a united Europe and reaffirmed American support for nuclear deterrence in Europe, but reporters concentrated on his warnings against "a growing complacency throughout the West" in the face of a continuing Soviet threat.

Even giving the administration its due, however, surely Bush can do better. This is not "p.r." that he is playing with Gorbachev, but global politics. In the television age, and especially with the spread of democracy, getting one's message across to world public opinion is vital to statesmanship. Bush was not above submitting to "orchestration" in 1988 to win the presidency. Now, reportedly, "handling" is a dirty word in the Bush White House. Yet the stakes are much higher: not just the winning of an election, but the ability of the U.S. president to persuade and lead the expanding free world.

What should Bush do? For starters, he should hire some White House speechwriters with a touch of soul. The State Department has drawn away two of his best foreign policy writers from the White House and the 1988 campaign, Josh Gilder and Harvey Sicherman, but surely they can be replaced, especially if the White House reverses its salary and status cutback for speechwriters. It's important: right now, even when Bush wants to make a large and generous point, he invariably ends up sounding grudging, pinched, spiteful, or scared.

Next, Bush needs to include in his speeches both broad themes—"visions"—and ideas and proposals that exemplify them. When John F. Kennedy made his memorable American University speech in 1963, calling for nuclear arms control, he promised that the United States would cease atmospheric testing as long as other nations did. In Bush's case, there seems to be a disagreement about idea-floating between supercautious National Security Council aides Brent Scowcroft, Robert Gates, and

Europe specialist Robert Blackwill, and more adventure-some subordinates of Secretary of State James Baker. The NSC has the view, one official said, that "most new ideas are bad." Many officials say that Bush ought not try to match Gorbachev with arms control concessions because, with the Soviets so far ahead in weapons, Gorbachev will always be able to promise more.

But Bush doesn't have to trump Gorbachev in numbers, just in hopes. He doesn't have to offer unilaterally to reduce U.S. forces in Europe by 50 percent, as some congressional Democrats have called for. Rather, he can offer to consider this possibility under the right circumstances—such as the destruction of Soviet tank forces and demobilization of troops. The United States already has reduced the number of nuclear warheads it has in Europe by 3,000 over the last ten years; it easily could promise to cut nuclear artillery in half under the right circumstances.

At Texas A&M, Bush had only two ideas to offer: a waiver of Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions if the Soviets permanently increase immigration rights, and "open skies." Had he wanted to demonstrate what was possible if the Soviet Union were "integrated" into the world, he could have borrowed from the detailed proposals gathered by the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, including joint environmental projects, work on a safe nuclear power design, establishment of a special economic zone in the Soviet Union, and steps toward making the ruble a convertible currency.

The lesson of these SAIS studies is that even if Bush is constitutionally averse to proposing U.S.-U.S.S.R. cooperative projects just for the sake of good p.r., some projects are worth floating in their own right: if they succeed, their benefits will be substantial, and if they don't, no great harm will be done. For example, now that the Soviet Union and China are entering a rapprochement, Bush could challenge the two of them to join the United States in halting the spread of advanced military technology to the Middle East and the Third World, and offer to use American good offices to get the NATO allies to go along. In general, Bush officials promised that in their various strategy reviews, they were going to envision the world as they wished it to be in the year 2000, then work backward to develop the goals and policies to get there. That work ought to be shown to the public.

It's a simple thing, but the White House has not begun to brief the press adequately on the meaning and content of the proposals Bush does make. "Open skies," for example, got lampooned as an anachronism in the satellite era, but its boosters say that the right to fly small planes and helicopters freely around other countries would dramatically transform conventional arms control verification. That wasn't explained when the speech was given. Also largely unexplained—except in one recent speech by Gates—are the reasons for Bush's caution on Soviet affairs: time and again over the last 70 years, Soviet thaws have led to terrible freezes, and this could happen once more if the Soviet system does not change. Bush should be as convincing about why he is not moving as about why he is.

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Bush has shown in other contexts that he can use his schedule to good effect, as when he met with anti-apartheid leaders from South Africa without altering his opposition to economic sanctions. He could have done the same with Chinese students, and he should have hosted the delegation of world democrats gathered in Washington on May 1 by the National Endowment for Democracy. Visiting Poland and Hungary on his July trip to Europe is a good idea, but next time, he ought to visit Czechoslovakia or East Germany, too.

It's important that the administration anticipate what Gorbachev may do, and get there ahead of him. For example, it's likely that Gorbachev will make some gesture in the direction of reunification of Germany when he visits Bonn in June. Bush visits Germany in late May, and he truly favors reunification, as Gorbachev probably does not. Why not explain exactly how it should take place? Asked about reports that Bush would, one NSC aide said, "That's a bum scoop." That's too bad. Ronald Reagan proposed that the Olympic Games in 2000 be held in a reunited Berlin. Bush could at least revive that idea, or expand upon it.

But Bush, apparently, resents the idea of resorting to Reaganesque techniques of political showmanship. That's OK. Perhaps he can take as his model John F. Kennedy, who was so effective at public diplomacy that his picture graced the walls of peasant huts all around the world. Bush needn't worry that he'll ever match the Kennedy example, or the Gorbachev example. But Bush has a much better product to sell than Gorbachev has, and he needs some counseling to sell it.

The House Democrats after Jim Wright.

MUSICAL CHAIRS

By Fred Barnes

Even on rumor-surfeited Capitol Hill, the one about a "clean sweep" of Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives attracted unusually lavish attention. I heard about it at a dinner with Republican House members. It was all they could talk about. A few days later *Newsweek* reported a version of it. The rumor had all three Democratic leaders—Speaker Jim Wright, Majority Leader Tom Foley, Whip Tony Coelho—stepping down for the good of the scandal-torn party. Replacing them would be Richard Gephardt as Speaker, Ed Jenkins of Georgia as majority leader, and Bill Gray of Pennsylvania as whip. The idea of a clean sweep was supposed to be particularly serious because it had been discussed, favorably, at a meeting involving former Speaker Tip O'Neill and Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. It was given additional weight because of a prior

rumor about sexual misconduct by Foley and Coelho.

Life in the House is less interesting than rumor. Rostenkowski denies his role in promoting a clean sweep. O'Neill was out of town at the time of the meeting. An associate of Gephardt says he's "a thousand miles away from anything like that." And Gray doesn't need to join a cabal to become whip. He'll probably get that post in the normal course of events, which means soon. Besides, there are two more believable scenarios of what will happen after Wright resigns as Speaker. One is that every member of the leadership will take one step up the ladder, Foley becoming Speaker, Coelho majority leader, and Gray, now chairman of the Democratic caucus, whip. I'd bet on this. The other is that Coelho, beset by the flap over a \$100,000 junk bond he bought in 1986, will stay on as whip, creating a fight for majority leader.

The only thing that can keep Foley from succeeding Wright—Wright's departure is a certainty—is personal scandal. Short of that, Foley is not likely to be opposed. John Dingell, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, says he might run if Foley doesn't, but he'd never challenge Foley. Neither would Gephardt, according to his allies. Rostenkowski would love to be Speaker, but he couldn't beat Foley. He's urged other House Democrats to persuade Gephardt to run. He and Gephardt are pals. When Gephardt announced his presidential bid, Rostenkowski showed up in St. Louis to endorse him. This time, the Rostenkowski endorsement is private, not public. For the record, Rostenkowski says he hasn't talked to Gephardt about his political future in six months. Gephardt confirms this. This is a non-denial denial; they haven't been accused of conspiring. The story, at any rate, is that Rostenkowski is touting Gephardt. If he's not, members of his clique are.

In terms of frustrated leadership ambition, nobody can top Rostenkowski. He lost out twice in getting on the leadership track. In 1971 Speaker Carl Albert retaliated for Rostenkowski's having embarrassed him on national television at the 1968 Democratic convention (he grabbed the gavel from Albert and pounded the podium to quiet the crowd). Albert chose O'Neill over him as whip. Then, in 1981, Rostenkowski had his own choice: either leap on the leadership ladder as whip or take the chairmanship of Ways and Means. He took the committee, and Foley became whip. In 1987 Foley moved up to majority leader, where he emerged, as Bill Whalen of *Insight* put it, as "the consummate consensus-builder in a body chock-full of deal-makers." Now Foley is practically the only unifying force among House Democrats. His ideology is faint enough for him to have broad personal appeal. More important, he's been able to create a broad consensus among Democrats on agreements with the Bush administration. Without him, there wouldn't have been a deal on Central America or the budget. Foley's other attribute is he's great on TV.

Gephardt is no stranger to anti-leadership cabals. But one of his close advisers says that "the one thing he's not interested in doing is running for something—and losing." That, Gephardt fears, would queer his prospects for running for president again in 1992, or later. "The presidency is where his mind is," says his adviser. (If he

ran for Speaker and won, he'd also have to give up his presidential hopes in 1992, but in that case the blow would be cushioned by his being Speaker.) A week before the 1984 election, Gephardt joined a dissident group of younger Democrats (Steny Hoyer of Maryland, Leon Panetta of California, Dave McCurdy of Oklahoma, among others) who convened at Coelho's home. They were dissatisfied with O'Neill's leadership and fearful that Democrats would lose dozens of House seats that year (they lost 15). Coelho denies that it was a dump-Tip meeting, but O'Neill believed otherwise. In any case, Gephardt didn't play along with the dissidents. He went to O'Neill, told him about the meeting, said he had no intention of challenging O'Neill for leader, and won Tip's undying gratitude. Gephardt has no stomach for a tough fight against a friend.

Coelho knows this. Gephardt has told him that he won't run against Coelho if Coelho tries to move up to majority leader, which is all but certain. Some Democrats have muttered that Coelho ought to stay put because of his current troubles, caused by his failure to report a \$50,000 loan to purchase the junk bond and by his excessively charitable remarks about John Mack, the former Wright aide who bludgeoned a woman 16 years ago and left her for dead. But no one has told Coelho to his face that he'd better not run for leader. He would be hard to persuade. He's both ambitious and impatient. Unless there's a new flap, Coelho figures he can win easily. He has friends where they matter—not in the outside world (though he has many there too) but inside the House. He's a great retail politician, warm and friendly. In fact, that's another reason why O'Neill didn't like him. Coelho likes to whisper to people, and O'Neill always figured he was conspiring against him. Rostenkowski thinks Coelho is too wily, a "trimmer," as he once put it. Everyone else, with the exception of Rostenkowski's pals and a few of Wright's cronies, likes him. Coelho has helped virtually every Democratic member raise campaign funds. That's the stuff that gratitude is made of.

Should Coelho surprise everyone (including me) and remain as whip, that would touch off a wild fight for majority leader. An open seat would be enticing to Gephardt. It shouldn't be too hard to argue him out of running in 1992, and many are willing to make the argument. Even if Gephardt got the presidential nomination, he'd have to run against an incumbent, which is always tough. And so on. Besides, Gephardt has all the traits of a good inside operator. He's great at schmoozing, and is liked by almost every Democrat of every faction. And he's got experience in leadership politics. He was elected caucus chairman in 1984. An open shot at leader would attract other candidates. One is Gray, the caucus chairman and former chairman of the Budget Committee. Gray is a black version of Gephardt. He draws support from an assortment of Democrats. John Murtha of Pennsylvania, an ally of Rostenkowski and an important player in internal Democratic politics, is a big Gray booster. The black congressional caucus backs him, naturally. Gray has also picked up support from Southerners in his two leadership races. They still like him. "He hasn't tried to lead the caucus in a way that would make Southerners uncomfortable," says a

Democratic strategist. It's a fragile coalition, but it's served Gray well so far. Gray, by the way, still preaches at his Philadelphia church on most Sundays.

If my expectations prove correct, there will be only one open fight—for whip. Gray is running. He's No. 4 in the pecking order as caucus chairman and believes he should move up to No. 3. David Bonior of Michigan is in line, too. Wright picked him as deputy whip to appease liberals. Bonior's drawback is that his seat isn't safe. His district in the suburbs of Detroit has been edging Republican in recent years, and Republican officials are eager to field a strong candidate against him in 1990. House Democrats don't want to suffer a repeat of the embarrassment they endured when John Brademas of Indiana, then whip, lost in 1980. There's also Beryl Anthony of Arkansas, a Wright protégé and chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the job that made Coelho famous. Anthony has raised more money than Coelho did, which is saying something. If he drew lockstep support from Southern Democrats, he might defeat Gray. But don't count on it.

After the turmoil of Wright's passing, the selection of new leaders may be bloodless. That doesn't mean Democratic troubles, big and small, are over. If the leaders are Foley, Coelho, and Gray, many Southerners and nearly all Texans will feel unrepresented and the Rostenkowski crowd will grouse. That's the small problem. The big one is the ethics war with Republicans. Since they hold power in the House, Democrats have a lot more to lose. True, there are rumors of an ethics truce. This time, though, life in the House should prove more interesting than the rumors.

Come on in, the water's fine.

HYPE TIDE

By Alan Burdick

Little did Manhattanite Herminio Rodrigues suspect that the pill bottle he accidentally dropped into the East River at 92nd Street last June would wash up on a beach in Queens a month later as "medical waste." But wash ashore it did, amid condoms, syringes, six-pack rings, soda containers, garbage bags, tampon applicators, and raw sewage. It thus did its tiny part to put the subject of medical waste on the cover of *Newsweek*, and to treat *New York Daily News* readers to such headlines as "SUMMER BUMMER—BEACH POLLUTION POISONS VACATIONS."

Washups of beach debris are nothing new. A wave of New York-area beach closings comparable to the closings of last summer struck in 1976. And as long ago as 1931 the cost of beach cleanup in New York was put at \$10,000 per mile. What caught the public's attention—and imagination—last year was the seeming novelty of

finding syringes and blood vials at the seashore. Fear of AIDS and general squeamishness had the press and public combing the beaches for medical waste, theorizing about legions of "midnight dumpers," and speculating feverishly about the health risks of wading.

The facts about medical waste have their good and bad sides. The good news is that any syringe that washed up on your local beach does not, in fact, present a major public health hazard. By all accounts, there is virtually no possibility of becoming infected with AIDS or hepatitis after being stuck by a needle derived from medical or hospital waste; any such virus that did find its way onto a syringe would never survive the days of exposure to sewage, salt water, and sunlight. More important, there is far less medical waste floating around than last summer's press coverage would have led you to believe.

The bad news is that medical waste may well be an uninvited guest at some beach parties in the mid-Atlantic region for some time to come. Those midnight dumpers originally thought responsible for the problem are now considered (by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation [DEC] among others) to be minor culprits. The real source of the trouble is much harder to bring to justice: social and technological trends, weather patterns, and a failure to deal adequately with garbage disposal in general.

Connecticut and Staten Island lifeguards say syringes have been around on beaches for years, and that last summer was the first time anyone noticed. Still, it's true

that medical waste has become a more prominent constituent of beach debris in the last decade, thanks largely to the American obsession with a pathogen-free lifestyle. Disposable plastics now constitute up to 30 percent of all wastes produced by New York hospitals. Disposable means floatable, so items like blood vials are more likely than ever to escape into public waters and be carried ashore. Nonetheless, most estimates place the amount of medical debris at only between one percent and ten percent of all debris that washed ashore last summer, with one DEC report comparing it to one lunch bag's worth for every two five-ton truckloads of debris.

Most beachgoers saw things differently. 1988 was the year of the misidentified floating object. Cigar containers were reported as blood vials, animal fat became human organs, household rubber gloves became surgical gloves, sewer rats became laboratory rats. One *Newsday* article last July bemoaned the sudden closing of Rockaway Beach after the discovery of "nine dead laboratory rats and what appeared to be a human stomach lining were found amid 125 blood vials and syringes." A subsequent study by the New York DEC found the story to be on target, except for the part about the laboratory rats, the stomach lining, and the blood vials; there were 26 sewer rats and assorted animal intestines, along with tampon inserters, condoms, and other vaguely vial-shaped objects.

Thanks to AIDS hysteria, the most feared of all medical waste is the hypodermic needle. The sighting of one

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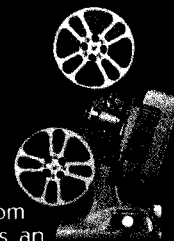
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LOOK TO US NORTHWEST AIRLINES

lone syringe was enough to close the entire Smith Point Park Beach in New York. Some 3,000 needles were actually collected on New York City beaches last summer, mainly on Staten Island. They were almost exclusively the type used by diabetics to inject insulin, and in fact were a small fraction of the 60,000 to 112,000 that diabetics in New York dispose of *daily*, either in household trash or down the john. (Traces of blood found in some of these small syringes suggest that the city's 250,000 drug users—more likely to discard used syringes into storm drains—may be partly culpable, but these syringes are no more dangerous than any others found on beaches.) New York City's eminently fallible solid waste disposal system guarantees that a sizable number of these syringes will end up in public waters.

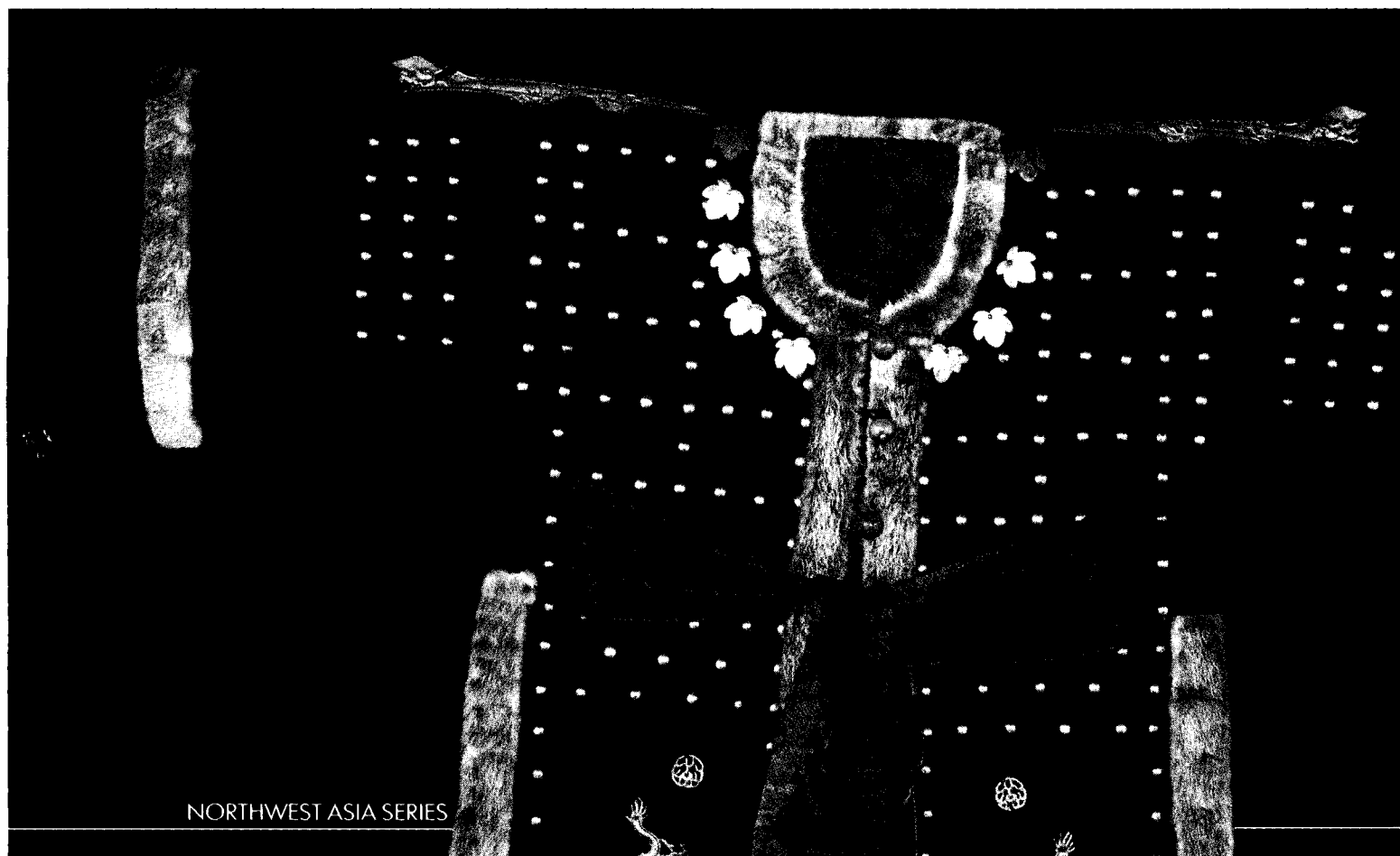
In fact, the ever expanding Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island is one of the primary culprits for last summer's washups. Rarely does all of the 20,000-plus tons of garbage that New York City daily sends to Fresh Kills reach its destination. Last year spillage from transport barges was observed on four out of five hauls; monitors estimate that three to four tons of debris are lost in the water each month. At the start of last summer, investigators deemed "floatables" on beaches just below Fresh Kills landfill "too numerous to count."

The other significant source of beach debris is the city's combined sewer overflow system. Most of New York's sewage pipes share their space with storm water drains. Any rainfall greater than one-fourth of an inch

causes sewage to bypass sewage treatment plants. So millions of gallons of raw sewage, insulin syringes, condoms, tampon inserters, and anything else you might find in your toilet would mingle with mangled umbrella spokes, dead rats, and anything else you might find in the streets and go directly into public waters.

The least controllable factor in last year's washup bonanza was the weather. Currents normally carry the plume of New York's debris past Staten Island and Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on its way out to sea. At the beginning of last summer, however, unusually persistent southwest winds pushed the plume northeast, depositing large quantities of debris along the shores of Brooklyn, Queens, and sections of Long Island. A report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concludes that whatever floatables were present in the mouth of Raritan Bay on June 6, when the winds shifted southwest, would have washed up in July on beaches from Atlantic Beach to Fire Island—i.e., the approximately 30 miles of beach that were closed during that period because of medical waste. These wind patterns were almost identical to those in 1976, the year New York beaches last faced significant washups.

The city has launched a couple of medical waste countermeasures, notably a program to scoop floatables out of the water before they have a chance to be blown onto the beaches. Though even critics say this will help, common sense puts the plan at best two steps away from solving the real problem of combined



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sewer overflows. The DEC has noted that "if no changes occur in the City's handling of its solid waste, it can be expected that given the same weather conditions, washups will occur again."

The Environmental Protection Agency, meanwhile, has decided to go after the elusive "midnight dumper." It has posted rules for dumping in order to "track" medical waste and make each handler more accountable for its step of the disposal process. But if the illegal dumping of waste from hospitals and other big-time operators accounts for only a tiny fraction of the medical waste, this won't help the average beachgoer much. In fact, as one critic of the policy has noted, it may well exacerbate the problem; the legislation could increase the cost of legal disposal, thereby multiplying incentives for large institutions to dispose of waste illegally.

Dirty diapers pose a more serious health risk than

any syringe or vial you might encounter in the sand. Fecal coliform bacteria, the invisible companion of raw sewage, can infect seafood and shellfish, and generates symptoms similar to food poisoning. New Yorkers will be cheered to know that there's no evidence of any bacterial plague on their beaches; all of the relatively few beach closings last summer that were due to elevated bacteria levels could be tied to specific breakdowns or power failures at sewage treatment plants. Beach proprietors also test the waters more rigorously than in past years. "In the 1960s they wouldn't test until you saw a turd floating past your head," says Will Berson of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection. In that sense, beaches on the East Coast are safer than ever—provided you can find one that's open.

ALAN BURDICK is a researcher at *The Sciences*.

FALLEN ANGEL

By Margaret Carlson

Tony Coelho, who once wanted to be a priest, must have missed the part in the Bible about the money changers getting driven out of the temple. He has based his entire congressional career on money—extracting it from people who have it and giving it to politicians, including himself, who need it. His record-breaking fund-raising efforts as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) made the party so rich that he is fairly credited by many in Congress with the Democratic lock on the House. So many colleagues are in his debt that he was elected majority whip in 1986 after serving only four terms.

But with Jim Wright's demise, and the prospect of Tom Foley becoming Speaker of the House, some Democrats have gotten a little squeamish about elevating Coelho to majority leader. For one thing, there is no evidence that he can do anything as well as he can raise money—no major bills, no burning ideology, no causes except for helping the dairy business (a large industry in the Central Valley of California, his home state) and fighting epilepsy (from which he suffers). And now that honesty as the best policy is coming back in vogue on Capitol Hill, if Coelho were to be put through the ethical scrutiny that Jim Wright has failed to survive, he might do no better.

MARGARET CARLSON is a senior writer at *Time*.

Tony Coelho's deal with the devil.

It isn't just all the cozing up to special interests to make the party rich. There are also signs that being around all this money, and the people who donate it, may have given him a taste for the stuff himself. Details of a fishy scheme in which Coelho made a quick buck on junk bonds are just beginning to come out. And it turns out that he held a stake in a company called Dairy Management Associates in 1985, when he helped author a farm bill that could affect that investment. (He put the DMA holdings into a blind trust last year, after news of the conflict of interest came out.)

Coelho's further ascent within the party is also complicated by the moral sensitivity question. His reputation was hurt by his ardent defense of John Mack, a top Hill aide who bludgeoned a young girl to the verge of death 16 years ago but who served less than three years in county jail thanks to the intervention of Jim Wright. Mack, Coelho's business partner and confidante, stepped down, but not before Coelho expressed more sympathy for him than for the victim. This, in turn, reminded people of Coelho's last bit of cheerleading for a violent felon. In 1982 campaign contributor John Weidert asked Coelho to have a word with the judge who was about to sentence Weidert's son, who had been convicted of first-degree murder. David Weidert had kidnapped, tortured, and killed a young retarded man whom he feared would testify against him in a burglary case. After choking his victim, stabbing him, and pum-

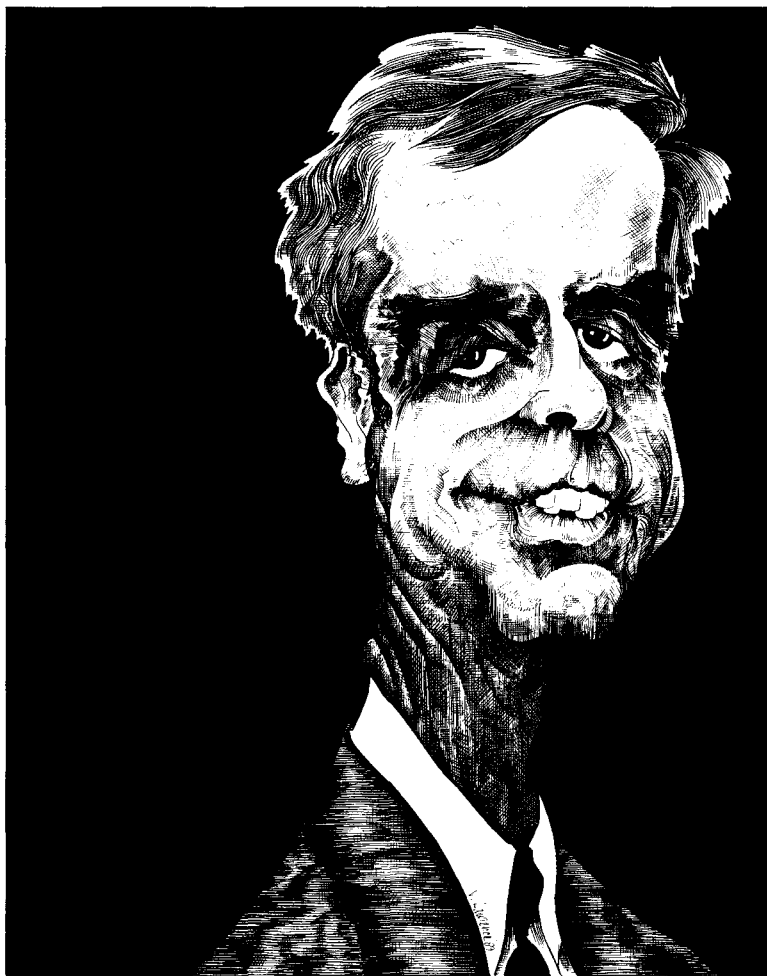
melting him with a baseball bat, Weidert forced him to dig his own grave. According to the testimony of an accomplice, Weidert threw his struggling victim in the hole, picked up a shovel, and buried him alive. Coelho wrote to the judge in the case, asking for leniency. In explaining this intervention, Coelho calls it the kind of thing one does for "a friend"—Weidert was not, he told the *Los Angeles Times*, a major contributor. "He gave me \$200, something like that." Weidert actually gave Coelho two \$1,000 contributions. In any event, the judge explained to Coelho that he had to give Weidert life in prison, the mandatory sentence.

Coelho's difficulty in distinguishing between friendship and cronyism isn't unusual in public life, but the extent of it is; virtually anyone with an open wallet is a "friend" who should be helped on the basis of loyalty. Several weeks before indicted junk-bond dealer Mike Milken would invoke the Fifth Amendment before a House subcommittee investigating inside trading, Coelho told an audience, "I am here tonight to show my respect and deep admiration for Michael Milken, my very good friend. . . . He is constantly thinking about what can be done to make this a better world." Coelho was speaking at a conference sponsored by his very good friend's firm, Drexel, Burnham, Lambert, which paid him \$2,000 for those remarks, and another \$4,000 in

1986 and 1987 for similar remarks. (Coelho is the fourth-largest collector of speaking fees in the House.) Between September 1985 and December 1986, Drexel gave over \$100,000 to the DCCC and \$8,000 to Coelho's own political action committee. Earlier this year Coelho got California Senator Alan Cranston to convince the Securities and Exchange Commission to hold off on pressuring Drexel to move its Beverly Hills office to New York, where the home office and the SEC could better supervise it.

It is a friend of a friend, so to speak—Thomas Spiegel, Milken's close friend at Columbia Savings and Loan in Beverly Hills—who got Coelho in his current trouble over the junk-bond deal. The bonds in question were a hot item; there were not enough to meet the demand

even from Drexel's regular customers. Coelho didn't have the \$100,000 cash for the bonds on the offering date, but Spiegel did. He bought them and held them for Coelho for a month—by which time they had risen in value by \$3,000. Spiegel then loaned Coelho \$50,000 to help buy the bonds (at their *original* price), which Coelho did not report, as required by House rules. Coelho had netted \$6,882 (after interest payments on his loan) when he sold the bonds a few months later. But he failed to report the right holding dates on his income tax return, an error that allowed him to pay \$2,000 less in capital gains than he should have.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Donald Ozenbaugh, Coelho's accountant, is taking the blame for all this. Although he knew about the loan, he says, he didn't have the documents, so he didn't report it. Ozenbaugh also says that reporting the date of the bond sale as June 3—even though Coelho had been profiting since Spiegel bought the bonds in April—was an oversight as well. This still leaves open the question of whether the \$3,000 by which the bonds had risen in value by the time Coelho actually paid for them was a gift from Spiegel, which would be a violation of House rules. (Coelho says he never did anything for Spiegel, and there is no record he did. On the other hand, *something* convinced the Federal Home Loan Bank Board last June to drop its efforts to

make Spiegel, the highest paid executive in the thrift industry, pay back about \$8 million he had received in compensation in 1985.)

Coelho got started in politics in 1965 working as an intern and then administrative assistant to his local congressman, B. F. Sisk. (He says he learned the importance of doing favors by watching Sisk dole out indoor parking spaces.) In 1978, after Sisk announced his retirement, Coelho ran for his seat and won. In his early years he attracted the attention of the leadership by pushing tickets to the Democrats' annual fund-raising dinner the way a Girl Scout sells cookies; no freshman without a decent committee assignment had sold \$50,000 worth of the \$500-a-plate tickets before. When DCCC chairman Representative James Corman of Cali-

fornia was defeated in 1980—the year the Republicans picked up 33 House seats and regained the Senate—the Democrats chose their second-term, 38-year-old Californian to head up their money machine.

Coelho sensed immediately that business PACs were a growth industry, and he set about convincing businessmen, many of whom had never been courted by a Democrat, that the party of FDR had something to offer them. A key to this effort was Democratic control of the House. Republican special interests (such as home builders, doctors, and bankers) saw, with Coelho's help, that it could be in their interest not only to cover themselves on both sides, but to give the bulk of their contributions to Democrats—who, after all, were in charge of the House committees.

In driving this point home, Coelho used a mixture of backslapping, arm twisting, and shakedown artistry. As one former Democratic House aide put it, "He didn't promise to do anything exactly. It's what he promised not to do, keeping the loopholes, providing access, a little like a protection racket—'nice little conglomerate you have there; bet you'd like to keep it that way.'" When the realtors' lobby wasn't coughing up for a Democratic incumbent in New Jersey in 1984, Coelho wrote a letter to the head of the National Association of Home Builders noting the warm relationship they had always enjoyed. But, he added, "Your action in this race causes us to be concerned that the relationship will be damaged."

Coelho discovered that businessmen would pay large sums for "access." Thus was born the Speaker's Club, whose members, for \$5,000 (\$15,000 for a PAC), could get an audience with Tip O'Neill and later Jim Wright (not to mention luggage tags, annual golf outings, and help with theater and hotel reservations). Coelho also proved that the Democrats didn't consider "access" an empty promise. For example, the Gallo wine family, which made \$325,000 in campaign contributions during the 1980s, wanted a provision in the tax reform bill that would let them give \$4 million tax-free to each grandchild. No problem. Coelho leaned on his friend on the Ways and Means Committee, Representative Ed Jenkins of Georgia, to push hard for a generic generation-skipping loophole.

Coelho made friends in the savings and loan industry. In 1985 and 1986, he used the High Spirits, the 112-foot yacht of Vernon Savings and Loan, to throw lavish fund-raising parties on the Potomac. The head of Vernon, Don Dixon, also contributed \$13,000 to the Democrats in a high-stakes 1985 congressional special election in Texas. But then Vernon collapsed under the weight of its high-flying loans and excessive spending (on the High Spirits, for example); Dixon was sued for fraud by FSLIC. He complained to Coelho, who enlisted the help of Wright, who obligingly asked the FHLBB not to close Dixon down. In-kind donations are a violation of federal law, so in 1987, after all of this came to light, the DCCC reimbursed Vernon with a check for \$48,451.

His tireless quest for special-interest money led Coelho to challenge two of his party's powerhouses—Tip O'Neill and Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski. Against their opposition, Coelho pushed to include breaks for independent oil and gas drillers in the tax

reform bill. (This prompted Representative James Shannon, a member of Ways and Means, to remark that he had always thought "he was on a tax-writing committee, not a fund-raising committee.") Coelho earned the everlasting enmity of O'Neill in 1984 when O'Neill was told that Coelho was holding meetings in the basement of his Virginia house to topple O'Neill from the Speakership. Rostenkowski has never warmed to Coelho, either. He stopped raising money for the campaign committee so that Coelho couldn't take credit for it. "I was the biggest fund-raiser that he had," he has said, "until I started to see Tony's moving in for the leadership."

Many Democrats in Congress feel about Coelho's money the way they feel about sausage—they'd like it better if they didn't know how it was made. Unfortunately for Coelho, he got to feeling pretty good about himself and the friends he was making for the Democrats. He issued a Gary Hartesque "follow me" invitation for the 1986 campaign season to *Wall Street Journal* reporter Brooks Jackson. Coelho allowed Jackson to observe how the most successful DCCC chairman in history separated Republican-leaning businessmen from their money. The result: a remarkable book called *Honest Graft: Big Money and the American Political Process*, which shows in extraordinary detail how Coelho cozied up to just the special-interest types Democrats have accused Republicans of hanging out with for years. The book, several Democratic leadership aides have noted, is comparable to the Ethics Committee report on Wright: it provides a map of where the bodies are buried. As one House aide put it, "You don't know how much more there is, how much of it will come out, how much the public will understand. But God knows we don't want to go through the Wright thing again."

Coelho may escape the ethics ax. Some members report a mutual non-aggression pact between him and Newt Gingrich: I won't push an investigation of your book deal if you won't push an investigation of my junk bonds. Although Common Cause may yet ask for an inquiry, Coelho's supporters believe his willingness to voluntarily provide the ethics committee with a 16-page report on the junk-bond deal has defused the issue. Coelho boasts that in all his dealings, he has never left footprints. "I was very careful not to get involved in their particular problems [the S&Ls]," he told the *Washington Post*. "No agency logged me in with a letter or call."

Coelho took a moment for self-reflection when Brooks Jackson asked him whether all the money that passed through his hands didn't compromise a lawmaker's integrity. Coelho said, "If you are spending all your time calling up different people that you're involved with, that are friends of yours, that you have to raise \$50,000, you all of a sudden in your mind, you're in effect saying, 'I'm not going to go out and develop this new housing bill that may get the Realtors . . . upset.'" He goes on, "I think that the process buys you out. But I don't think that you individually have been bought out, or that you sell out. I think there's a big difference there."

Coelho's mother once confided to reporters that she was glad her son had turned to politics rather than the priesthood. "I knew he'd become one of those fooling-around priests." Politics tolerates a good deal of fooling

around—rewards it, in fact. Still, the Democrats should not take lightly the question of how prominent a role in their future should be played by someone known primarily for making rich friends. Ultimately, this is a decision about whether Democrats will be answerable to the well connected and the organized or to the underorganized

and unsuspecting—the people who catch the early bus, the people for whom the Democratic Party supposedly exists. Coelho, of course, says the Democrats can't help their core constituents if they don't have the money to win, which is a little reminiscent of Woody Allen's observation that if the end doesn't justify the means, what does?

BALLOT BLOCKS

By Robert Kagan

A cable to the State Department from the American Embassy in Managua makes a number of troubling observations about the prospects for free and fair elections in Nicaragua. Specifically:—The military “can easily be mobilized to help influence the outcome, especially in outlying areas . . .”

—“A substantial portion of the media is under [the government's] control . . .”

—“The [government] bureaucracy is closely linked to the . . . party and under tight discipline and all services and resources of the government are used for the [party] . . .”

“Under these circumstances,” the cable concludes, “the opposition sees itself at a great disadvantage. . . . The opposition wants a period of freedom to recruit, organize and campaign as well as to divest the party of its monopoly of power before competing in a contest with [the government].”

This cable was written more than ten years ago to describe the underhanded tactics the Somoza regime could use to fix an election. In response to such reports, the Carter administration put forth a plan calling for an international authority to supervise almost every aspect of the electoral process, from voter registration to the determination of the number and location of voting booths to the counting of ballots. All government military forces were to stay in their barracks before, during, and after the vote, and two senior military officials were to resign and leave the country. The Nicaraguan Constitution was to be amended to include provisions for the transfer of power in the event that the government lost the election. In short, this plan amounted to nothing less than an attempt to wrest control of the electoral system from the government. It's not surprising that Somoza refused to participate. Seven months later the Sandinista revolution triumphed.

Today, as a result of the March agreement between

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Keeping the Sandinistas honest.

the Bush administration and Congress, American policy in Nicaragua turns again to the issue of elections. The questions are the same as a decade ago: Can the government be trusted to run an election that will be free and fair, an election that it might lose? And if it loses, can it be trusted to accept the results? The answers are also the same as a decade ago: no and no. For that reason, it is time to think as ambitiously as the Carter administration did about ways for the world to keep Nicaraguan elections honest.

The lesson of Panama's recent election, surely not lost on the Nicaraguan government, is that stealing an election on the day of the vote, or the day after the vote, can be a disaster in the modern world of telecommunications; a group of competent and credible international observers is enough to guarantee that. The lesson of Nicaraguan elections—under Somoza and under the Sandinistas—is that rigging the election months before election day is less easily detected. The question of how the world can expose such doings should be addressed long before the Nicaraguan election in January of next year.

The Nicaraguan government's monopoly on power is an even more serious problem today than it was ten years ago. Somoza's Liberal party, corrupt and domineering though it may have been, could never compete with the modern Sandinista party, which is more skilled in politics, mobilization, and the exercise of power than Somoza and his Tammany Hall-style cronies. Somoza's 10,000- to 15,000-man Guardia Nacional has been replaced by a Sandinista army, militia and reserves ten times the size. An overwhelming portion of the media, not a “substantial portion,” is under government control. The Nicaraguan opposition parties are at the mercy of a party-run bureaucracy that can, throughout the campaign, deny them critical, scarce resources—paper, gasoline, electricity, access to financing. If the Sandinistas want to steal the election, they can.

Many opposition leaders believe the theft has already begun. On April 18 the Sandinista assembly passed new electoral and press laws after only perfunctory discussions with the opposition. The laws say President Daniel

Ortega will pick all slates of candidates for the powerful Supreme Electoral Council. Control of the council ensures that all appointments to provincial and local electoral boards will also be under Sandinista control. The new laws require that half of all foreign contributions to opposition parties go to the Supreme Electoral Council. Billed as a concession by the government, which had not before allowed any foreign contributions, this tapping of international support for opposition parties will provide a unique source of hard currency to the Sandinista party.

The press laws prohibit *La Prensa*, the leading opposition daily, from receiving overseas contributions. (The newspaper isn't even allowed to accept donations in the form of supplies, so it must keep buying its newsprint from the government at inflated prices.) The Interior Ministry can prosecute opposition-run media for violating "national integrity" and for "injurious, defamatory and false news." It can close newspapers and radio stations at will. The government controls all television airtime, and promises to parcel out 30 minutes of each day's broadcast to the opposition candidates it chooses. But there will be several splinter opposition groups, some backed by the Sandinistas, so the most threatening opposition candidate may often be shut out. Polling in advance of elections, which has proved a critical aid to fair electoral campaigns in such troubled countries as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Chile, is prohibited by Sandinista law. Arbitrary detention is still legal, and political prisoners still sit in Sandinista jails.

Last year politicians in the United States and Latin America debated how best to bring about change in Nicaragua. But all agreed that change, from tyranny to democracy, was necessary. Costa Rican president Oscar Arias said, "Without democracy in Central America, there can be no peace." And all understood Sandinista ideology and self-interest well enough to know that without international pressure there would probably be no democracy. Indeed, the Arias peace plan was based not on trust that the Sandinistas would hold fair elections, but on suspicion that they would not. Supporters of the plan argued that ending the *contra* war would allow more peaceful intrusion into Nicaraguan politics.

But the intrusion has not gone very far. Back in 1978 issues such as opposition access to the media and freedom from arrest, and amnesty for all political prisoners were merely preconditions, steps demanded by the opposition—and mostly fulfilled by Somoza—before negotiations on elections even began. Yet today these seem to be the *only* conditions by which the international community intends to judge the Sandinistas' elections, and not very harshly at that. The crucial need for a level playing field, embodied in the pronouncements of the Central American presidents at Esquipulas and Tesoro Beach, has been seriously addressed only by a small private monitoring group, Freedom House. No international mechanism yet exists to promote a truly fair election in Nicaragua.

The legitimacy of such a mechanism has long been recognized. A group from the Organization of American States (OAS) observed elections in Costa Rica in 1962 and reported that all three stages of an election—

the campaigning, the balloting, and the period after the vote—were properly and necessarily part of any international monitoring effort, and that existing election laws were not the "court of final appeal." Last year's plebiscite in Chile was monitored from the beginning of the campaign through the vote and the counting of ballots by almost 1,000 international observers, including former heads of state, political party leaders, and election experts from five continents.

The United States and other democratic countries should establish an official international role in the Nicaraguan electoral process. A plan modeled on the Carter administration's 1978 plebiscite proposal might call for an international supervisory body, approved by the OAS, made up of representatives from three to five democratic nations—Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, the United States, and Spain, for example. The group would act as arbiter between the opposition and the government; recommend changes in electoral procedures necessary to improve the prospects for fair elections; provide the opposition with continuous access to an impartial international body well before the day of the vote; and monitor the planning and organization of the vote to ensure fairness—from campaigning to registration to the counting of ballots.

Some—the Sandinistas, for example—may call this plan a violation of Nicaragua's national sovereignty. Indeed, it is hard to regulate the conduct of an entire election campaign without impinging on broad functions of government. When Carter officials devised their plan for an internationally supervised plebiscite, they understood it meant intervening in the affairs of another sovereign state. Carter, the most devout non-interventionist of all postwar presidents, even sympathized with some of Somoza's complaints. But ultimately even he understood that intervention has its place in international relations.

In Latin America the principle of non-intervention can sometimes be the last refuge of scoundrels. Somoza rejected U.S. interference. And perhaps Nicaragua's Bayardo Arce gave a hint of future Sandinista rhetoric when he warned that events in Panama showed "the danger that the United States will turn itself into the only great judge of democracy in Latin America"—as if only the United States had found fraud in Panama. (Only Nicaragua voted with Panama against condemning Noriega in the OAS.) If the Sandinistas oppose extensive international supervision they should find no more sympathy than Noriega, Pinochet, or the late Somoza.

Perhaps some democratic leaders in this hemisphere find it politically most convenient to give the Sandinistas a test they can pass. Absent Noriega-style bloodletting, they would just as soon let the Sandinistas pull off a fraud. A particular responsibility to resist this cynical impulse rests with those who promoted diplomatic pressure as an alternative to armed pressure; but even the *contras'* most devoted supporters must realize that the elections are, for now, the only game in town. It is simply not enough to rely on the warnings of a few American citizens, the reporting of journalists, the visits of well-meaning congressmen, and the occasional public chidings of international leaders. •

DIVORCE, ALLIANCE-STYLE

By Alan Tonelson and Christopher Layne

By all rights, NATO's 40th anniversary summit should be a U.S.-Western European love feast. The Continent is at peace, Western Europe is poised to achieve new economic dynamism, and the allies' clear favorite, George Bush, won last year's presidential election. Political pluralism is taking hold in Eastern European nations such as Hungary and Poland, and the very mellowing of Soviet power sought by America's postwar containment policy seems to be under way. Nonetheless, the weeks leading up to the summit have been dominated by news of an intense disagreement over the fate of 88 nearly obsolete short-range nuclear missile launchers.

The problem behind the Lance missile dispute is simply that 40 years of change in world politics have finally caught up with the alliance. A politically unified and independent Western Europe seems to be emerging. West Germany, increasingly the region's dominant economic and political power, is gaining the confidence to pursue its own national interests—and particularly to re-establish its traditionally strong ties to the East—no matter what America thinks. And Mikhail Gorbachev has rekindled hopes on both sides of the Elbe that the Continent's cold war division can be replaced by a new, all-European security order. As the Lance dispute shows, these changes have reawakened a fundamental tension between U.S. and European interests, a tension, rooted in geography and bearing on national life and death, that dates back to the birth of the alliance. The problem is that U.S. and Western European strategies are based ultimately on the desire of each to foist the risks of war onto the other.

Resolving this tension in a way that serves U.S. interests will call for a far more ambitious overhaul of NATO than has been seriously considered. The United States will unquestionably retain important long-term interests in European security, but the nature of its commitment to that security needs to be rethought. This moral of the Lance story will hold true even if, as is likely, all of NATO's members sign on to a resolution of the Lance crisis—or, more accurately, a postponement of it.

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Although U.S. complaints about NATO are usually framed in terms of "burden-sharing," it is actually risk-sharing, a rather different thing, that has always lain at the heart of the alliance's troubles. After maintaining their freedom, the top priority of the Western Europeans—especially the front-line West Germans—understandably is preventing their countries from becoming the battlefield of a future war, whether conventional, nuclear, or both. This priority implies two main concerns: avoiding war altogether, and ensuring that, should deterrence fail, any nuclear conflict would be a strategic one, waged by the superpowers over the Europeans' heads. In a sense, these two concerns dovetail: one good way to avoid war altogether is to ensure that a Soviet invasion of Western Europe would result in a nuclear exchange with the United States.

No wonder the INF treaty, which eliminated NATO's intermediate-range nuclear missiles, shocked so many West German military strategists. Because European-based Pershing II missiles could hit targets in the Soviet Union itself, NATO's use of these weapons was likely to have drawn Soviet retaliatory strikes to the United States, almost certainly triggering a full-scale nuclear war between the superpowers. NATO's post-INF Europe-based nuclear forces—the Lances and nuclear artillery shells—are unable to reach Soviet soil, and therefore their use is less likely to convert a Warsaw Pact attack on Europe into a nuclear war between the superpowers, and more likely to end in a nuclear war confined to Europe.

Still, crossing the conventional/nuclear firebreak by using the Lances would—especially given the 330,000 U.S. soldiers in Europe—stand a good chance of leading to a superpower exchange. For that reason, many Western Europeans continue to see U.S. tactical nuclear weapons like the Lance as the hair triggers that link America's very survival to protecting Western Europe. But the West Germans find this less reassuring than other Western Europeans, for they realize that a Europe-based NATO deterrent consisting almost exclusively of tactical nuclear weapons puts both East and West Germany uniquely at risk. "The shorter the range, the deader the Germans," as the saying goes.

The United States, understandably, does not share the European allies' enthusiasm for a nuclear war fought over their heads—i.e., the longer the range, the deader the Americans. If deterrence fails in Europe, it is

in America's interest to confine the conflict to Europe. (And this interest remains prominent in the minds of U.S. strategists notwithstanding the basic paradox of NATO deterrence: the less likely such confinement is, the less likely deterrence is to fail in the first place.) Through the early 1960s, overwhelming U.S. nuclear superiority masked this U.S.-European strategic rift; the risks to America of a deterrent resting ultimately on U.S.-based nuclear weapons seemed minimal. And this minimal risk, in turn, made the strategy seem correspondingly credible. But once the Soviets developed the ability to retaliate massively against America, the prospect of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange became much more frightening for Americans, and the incompatibility of American and European interests became apparent.

Consequently, since the mid-1960s, U.S. NATO policy has been whipsawed by crosscutting imperatives. On the one hand, Washington has sought to reduce the risks of its European commitment and regain the power to decide if and when its long-range nuclear forces would come into play, by reducing NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons and enhancing NATO's ability to fight a conventional war. On the other hand, America has been loath to revoke its nuclear guarantee altogether—for fear that so doing would dilute America's predominant role in NATO, and leave Europe at the mercy of Moscow's purportedly overwhelming conventional armies.

As political perceptions have caught up with these strategic realities, the alliance has been roiled by a series of seemingly disparate disputes that all ultimately concern nuclear risk-sharing—disputes over America's determination to build a Star Wars missile defense, over the INF treaty, over Reagan's near agreement at Reykjavik to scrap the superpowers' strategic nuclear forces while leaving the European conventional balance untouched, and over Western Europe's reluctance to boost defense spending significantly.

With each passing controversy, American suspicions grew—justifiably—that the European allies had no interest in reducing the risks of nuclear holocaust by helping to mount an effective conventional defense (which would only play into the U.S. strategy of reducing NATO's reliance on an American guarantee of nuclear retaliation); and no strong desire to relieve the United States of some of the economic burden of stationing a large army on the Continent (after all, they believe, the more American soldiers at risk, the greater the chance of American nuclear intervention). And Western European suspicions grew—justifiably—that a top American priority is restricting an East-West conventional or nuclear conflict to European soil.

The Lance controversy has removed just about all remaining doubts on both sides as to this basic antagonism of aims. How else could the Western Europeans explain America's agreement to eliminate all of its Europe-based nuclear missiles capable of hitting Soviet territory and its determination to modernize the remaining missiles—which could explode only over Germany? How else could the United States explain the Europeans' continued reluctance to assume

greater responsibilities for mounting an effective conventional defense; their clear desire to strip NATO of all nuclear capabilities save for U.S. strategic forces; and their equally clear desire to preserve in undiminished numbers the American troop presence that for them still represents the surest link to this deterrent?

Gorbachev has not caused these problems, but he has made them much worse. Western Europeans, particularly the West Germans, believe the cold war is over. Plans to build up NATO defenses are out; the drive to create a new political order in Europe is in. Meanwhile, Moscow's initiatives and the Western Europeans' "Gorbomania" have also heightened the resolve of many Americans to shuck the fiscal burdens and the nuclear dangers of defending a wealthy region that shows little interest in defending itself.

NATO leaders may well paper over their differences once again and avoid an open rupture at their 40th anniversary bash. But without a long-term U.S. political strategy for managing its relations with Western Europe—especially these risk-sharing issues—a trans-Atlantic divorce is practically inevitable, with all the uncertainties and dangers that would entail. More important, such a strategy is needed because today the United States is stuck with the lion's share of both the enormous costs of a barely credible NATO conventional defense and the risks of underwriting NATO's strategic nuclear guarantee.

The United States cannot wait for conventional arms negotiations to succeed before addressing these problems. Its budget problems are too pressing. Its \$150 billion to \$170 billion annual expenditures for Western Europe's defense are no more responsible for the budget deficit than any other program. But if they are not slashed soon, the need for better fiscal balance will dictate some combination of big tax increases and big domestic spending cuts. And today's cooked deficit figures omit the huge costs of meeting all the domestic needs neglected over the last decade, from bailing out the thrifts and cleaning up nuclear weapons plants to rebuilding our crumbling schools and infrastructure, developing non-fossil fuels, and enhancing our international economic competitiveness.

The Lance compromise initially suggested in Congress and by Paul Nitze—an American agreement to start negotiating reductions in exchange for a Western European agreement to support leaving some Lances in place and modernizing them—would reduce neither the costs nor the risks to America of its NATO role. Pretty much the same can be said for the compromise offered by Washington—to enter into Lance negotiations once substantial progress toward bilateral (but mostly Warsaw Pact) reductions in conventional arms has been made.

Washington should offer to meet the legitimate demand of West Germany and its allies and eliminate short-range nuclear weapons, either unilaterally or (preferably) through negotiations. No matter what the Bush administration says now, it has long been a virtual consensus among U.S. military strategists that these weapons do not serve a rational military purpose; even

after the INF treaty, they are so massively offset by Warsaw Pact nuclear forces that it would be suicidal to use them in response to a conventional invasion. And this implausibility of first use greatly undermines their value as a deterrent. Moreover, to the extent that short-range nuclear arms *do* serve as a deterrent, it is mainly through the prospect that their use, given the American military presence in Europe, would drag the United States against its will into a nuclear war. This is not a prospect we should welcome. All told, the main effect of the continued presence of Lance missiles in an inhospitable West Germany is to poison trans-Atlantic relations.

Given how badly the West Germans want to see the Lance go, and given the prominence that U.S. strategic forces would have in a post-Lance world, the United States should get something in return for acquiescing. Specifically, Washington should announce that it will withdraw and demobilize one or two of the five-plus U.S. divisions in West Germany, and ask the Western Europeans to replace these divisions with forces of their own. Such a step would significantly ease the U.S. budget crisis. Indeed, the savings of \$13.5 billion per year per division would give Wall Street a noticeable thrill. Yet this reduction of the U.S. financial commitment to NATO would not diminish NATO's conventional force and therefore would not heighten the risk of plunging America into a nuclear war against its will. (Even if the allies did not fill the gap, the change in the military balance would probably not be decisive in the event of a Soviet attack.) Perhaps most important, such a deal would also permit the United States to regain some of the diplomatic initiative in arms control captured by Gorbachev, and bolster NATO's political solidarity.

Contrary to the Bush administration's stated concern, getting rid of the Lance, and even other NATO tactical nuclear weapons, would not lead to NATO's denuclearization. The very existence of the American-based strategic deterrent would still vastly complicate Moscow's calculations. Besides, the British and the French would retain their own national nuclear forces—capable, remember, of striking the heart of Russia. And the European NATO members would be encouraged to develop their own joint nuclear force—if only to head off West Germany's unilateral acquisition of such weapons. In other words, European deterrence would be not denuclearized, but de-Americanized—an objective that, so long as the deterrent is credible, is in America's interest.

Quite aside from the Lance question, the United States could obtain budgetary relief through the recently opened East-West conventional force reduction talks. Washington should stipulate immediately that when these negotiations do actually permit cuts in NATO forces, the vast majority of the forces cut will be American. Remaining U.S. forces, to be sure, should be large enough to serve as a symbol of America's continued interest in Europe's fate, and to remind the Soviets that any conventional attack would lead to a direct superpower confrontation, and possibly even full-scale nuclear war. But two divisions—around 50,000

troops plus support personnel—would easily be enough to do that, and cutting America's NATO commitment from five-plus divisions to two would save more than \$40 billion per year—nearly a third of the entire budget deficit.

To address NATO's longer term problems, the United States should propose comprehensive negotiations on Europe's military and political future. To forestall charges of superpower collusion and give a boost to Western Europe's drive for political unity, these talks should be three-cornered discussions among the United States, the Soviet Union, and the European Community. In fact, the Western Europeans should be encouraged to play the lead role for the alliance.

Generally deferring to the Western Europeans would not be risk free. After all, the negotiations would need to tackle many difficult issues that affect important American interests—the political future of the two Germanys, the orderly emergence of a neutral, pluralistic Eastern Europe, and reductions in whatever Soviet and American military presences remained in Europe following the conventional arms talks. But Western unity cannot withstand much longer the Western Europeans' perception that America is the principal force blocking their aspirations for normal political and economic relations with the Soviets and the Eastern Europeans, or for reduced tensions on the Continent. At the same time, a partial U.S. military disengagement would force the Western Europeans to negotiate their future more responsibly, and to consider more carefully the consequences of *Ostpolitik*.

Paradoxically, the Bush administration can afford to stand pat in Europe only by taking a relatively benign view of Soviet intentions—that while Moscow still wants to make life difficult for America, the Soviets do not really mean to drive us out of Europe, and will never change certain long-held positions concerning German unification and Eastern European autonomy. This is not a safe bet. Indeed, if Washington remains intractable in its relations with West Germany and other NATO members, Gorbachev could be positioned to drive a stake through NATO's heart, even as early as his visit to Bonn in June. If, for example, he offered to tear down the Berlin Wall in exchange for a Central European nuclear-free zone, the alliance could well collapse.

To retain a strong trans-Atlantic relationship into the next century, the United States must reduce the excessive cost and risks currently imposed by the alliance, while at the same time yielding the prerogatives of hegemony. And the Western Europeans must assume the burdens of responsibility. A nukes-for-troops deal could start the process of turning NATO from a protectorate into a true alliance, where the greatest risks and costs are borne by the countries in gravest danger. It would put the onus of negotiating Europe's future where it belongs—on the Europeans—while increasing the odds that they will bargain hard and responsibly. It would remove America as the villain of the piece and call the Soviets' bluff (if that's what it is). And it would enable the United States to resume playing an active, constructive role in shaping Europe's future. •

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Cut to Fit

Bad luck again for Beth Henley. Once more this gifted writer suffers from an inadequate director. This was true in the New York theater, and it's even truer on the screen. Her screenplay *Nobody's Fool* and her film adaptation of her play *Crimes of the Heart* were both bungled. Now there's bungling once again, by Thomas Schlamme in the film version of **Miss Firecracker** (Corsair).

This is Schlamme's first feature, after considerable TV experience. TV alumni tend to overdirect in their big-screen debuts; Schlamme underdirects. He leaves the film alone too much of the time, lets it dawdle and sag. *Miss Firecracker* is not overly crammed with substance in any case, and Schlamme keeps italicizing trifles. But the molehills remain molehills. What's especially painful is that he doesn't grasp the counterpoint that is essential to every Henley piece.

Henley's original play was called *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, and in customary Henley style it presented a surface of Mississippi small-town chat and diction, so faithful as to be affectionately satirical. ("Good Lord and butter," exclaims someone. "I hope you rot in H!" exclaims someone else.) But, as usual, underneath flows a dark current. Schlamme concentrates on the surface so thoroughly that we can hardly glimpse the darkness below.

Some of this, admittedly, is the fault

of Henley's adaptation. In the play a 24-year-old woman named Carnelle Scott wants to win the town's annual Fourth of July talent-and-beauty contest to become Miss Firecracker. Since she is neither especially talented nor pretty, she seems at first merely misguided. As the play progresses, we see that the contest is, to her, a means of redemption. Although she says she has changed, she has slept with so many men in this town that she is nicknamed Miss Hot Tamale. She contracted syphilis and transmitted it to at least one of her lovers. (She has been cured. The man doesn't care—he's dying of TB and some other things anyway.) Apparently the contest crown will reestablish her in her own eyes and, she feels, the town's. The cooing and gushing because of the annual celebra-

tion, the communal hoopla, overlies a grim base.

No disease in the film. After we have all hurried to concede that of course the syphilis had to be omitted if the screenplay was to be produced, we then have to ask what is left—especially since now the contest is excessively detailed instead of being an offstage rite understood without details. Overall, a work that disclosed secrets and hypocrisies and pain under a lot of syrupy nattering now concentrates on the nattering.

Henley and Schlamme retained only one of the play's gothic elements, the incestuous feelings between Carnelle's cousins, Elain and her brother Dalmount, but now the suggestion of incest seems eccentric in an otherwise folksy comedy. To confirm the new cheeriness in the film, Henley provides an ending—Carnelle on top of an observatory looking at the night sky—that might have made Walt Disney squirm.

Holly Hunter played Carnelle off-Broadway in 1984 and seemed puny. She repeats the role in the film and seems even smaller. It's not just because she's short: when the camera closes in and her face completely fills the screen, she still seems small. Hunter is honest and committed, but she struggles and struggles for whatever she is supposed to be expressing, like a child groping for something just out of reach.

The best performance comes from Tim Robbins as the mad—perhaps truly mad—Dalmount, though the scene in which he rampages through a boutique is ridiculous. (Not his fault: it's what he was given to do.) Robbins brings hot small-town frustration and surliness to the part. To a non-admirer, Mary Steenburgen is a pleasant surprise as Elain, a former Miss Firecracker, now suffocatingly married. Steenburgen conveys that Elain, not Steenburgen, is desperately acting the role of conventional Southern belle in which this society has imprisoned her, meaning to get all the perks she can out of her captivity.

Popeye, Carnelle's dressmaker, is here

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Chocolat. A young Frenchwoman returns to Cameroon where she grew up, remembers her childhood, and notes the changes. Very quiet, subtly strong. (Reviewed 4/17/89) *How to Get Ahead in Advertising.* English satire on the supermarketing of the world. The realism becomes somewhat wobbly symbolic fantasy, but the dialogue by writer-director Bruce Robinson crackles, especially as bitten out by the hero, Richard E. Grant. (6/5/89) *Lawrence of Arabia.* Join the happy society of those who have seen this wonderful film—in its restored version. (Some have seen it more than once.) (2/20/89) *Little Vera.* A Soviet comedy-drama that is (a) revealing about the disaffection of Soviet youth; (b) engagingly acted and directed; (c) a touch more sexually explicit than you might expect from a puritanical country. (5/1/89) —SK

played by a black actress, Alfre Woodard. In the play she is not black. Those who know more than I about Mississippi towns can judge the credibility of this casting, including some passionate kisses with Dalmount. In any case, Woodard has the right dippy comedy for the role.

Once again, the real Henley is like a valuable theorem that has not yet been put into full practice.

Writers and agents are always pitching ideas for films at producers. Sometimes the picture gets made, and sometimes what is ultimately most visible is the pitch. **See No Evil, Hear No Evil** (Tri-Star) is about a blind man and a deaf man who become friends. ("That's the story? You gotta be kidding, Phil.") One is black, the other is white. ("I'm listening.") They get innocently involved in a murder and have to solve the crime to prove their innocence. ("It's cooking.") Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder. ("I like it.")

Pryor and Wilder were in the hit *Stir Crazy*, and this film was tailored to fit by five tailors—two writing teams, Earl Barret & Arne Sultan and Eliot Wald & Andrew Kurtzman plus Gene Wilder. Insurance was taken out in the person of Arthur Hiller, who had directed a previous Pryor-Wilder success, *Silver Streak*, and such good farce-comedies as *The In-Laws* and *Outrageous Fortune*. All this product-planning turned out fairly well: the film is a tenuously connected series of skits with some funny moments.

Pryor is a force of show-biz nature, naturally "on," secure and commanding. Wilder works. At his best, he is a strained reminder of Danny Kaye; at his worst, we're not quite sure what he's doing up there. Pryor at his worst, which is rare, has indestructible gall.

Hiller directed with nice loose vaudeville playfulness. The opening shots are worrisome—the New York skyline. (Will the millionth film to use that opening get some sort of Grand Prize? We shouldn't have to wait long to find out.) And Hiller includes yet another of those wild car chases through crowded streets in which much damage is done yet no one is hurt. But the Writing Five came up with some good gags, and Hiller helps.

Note on credits: Perhaps you've noticed that the "crawl" of credits at the end of films has become longer. One recent film, produced by (I can't remember his real name) William Frammis carried the credit: "Mr. Frammis's Divorce Lawyer . . . Joseph Zilch." Another recent film gave a credit to a Footsteps Editor. *See No Evil* credits a First Assistant Director, a Second Assistant Director, and a Second Second Assistant Director. In music this might be called an augmented Third. •

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Israel and the Media

Are current events in Israel getting fair coverage?

In December of 1987, an Israeli civilian was stabbed by Arabs in the Gaza territory, administered by Israel. On the following day, four Gaza Arabs were killed by an automobile driven by an Israeli. The two events were totally unrelated. Yet, the rumor spread that the Arab deaths were revenge murders by the Israelis. Rioting broke out and spread into Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank"), also administered by Israel. It was the beginning of the "intifada," which still goes on. The media have covered and continue to cover this uprising extensively. Are they doing it fairly?

What are the facts?

■ The conflict between the Israeli government and the Arabs in the areas administered by Israel, the so-called "intifada," is essentially a minor regional one. It does not compare in scope, in violence and in the number of people killed or injured to the many other conflicts going on in the world right at this time, such as the conflict between the Basques and Spain; between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; and between Moslems, Hindus and Sikhs in India. And there are many more. Just as with the Arab-Israel conflict, no easy or early solution seems at hand.

■ Yet, while the "intifada" is only one of many regional conflicts, the volume of its coverage in the media has made it appear to be a major world event. There are over 250 press and t.v. reporters accredited in Israel, a tiny country the size of New Jersey and with only half the population of New Jersey. This large media contingent is second only in number to that of Washington and Moscow—and less than that of such key news centers as London, Paris, Bonn, New Delhi, Peking or Tokyo. Naturally, all of these reporters must produce daily stories in order to justify their presence. This results in much journalistic overkill. *The Washington Post*, for instance, reports in an internal audit that . . . during a 5-month period in 1988, they published over 300,000 words on the "intifada," more than two articles daily, one-quarter of which appeared on the front page. That was the most intense coverage by the *Post* of any continuing story. In contrast, when in one day 65 Shi'ites were killed in one of the brotherly battles in neighboring Lebanon, the *Post* gave that only 600 words, in an article on page 15.

■ But it isn't just the intensity of coverage that casts serious doubt about the fairness of the media. It's primarily the slant that is being given to the news, both in the print media and on television. Television, especially, thrives on "action bites," short dramatic scenes with potential to get the viewer involved. For instance, we see over and over again pictures of

teenage boys throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers, and the soldiers chasing those teenagers with guns and clubs. That inevitably creates the impression of Israel as the bully or the Goliath, and of the "Palestinians" as defenseless Davids. The opposite is true, of course. Israel is a beleaguered country surrounded by implacable enemies, who incessantly plot its destruction. The "intifada" is part of that never-ending war.

■ The media do not show the hundreds of Israeli soldiers and civilians who have been grievously wounded and in some cases killed by rocks and gasoline bombs. They do not show the Arabs setting countless arson fires, in which over 25,000 acres of forest—every tree having lovingly been planted by hand—have been destroyed. They do not show the attacks on Jewish farms, the wanton destruction of industrial and public service facilities, the fire bombing of hundreds of buses, and the ruthless killing of livestock. They do not show the PLO terror aimed at the "Palestinians" themselves. In the last seventeen months of the "intifada" dozens of Palestinian Arabs have been murdered by the PLO, hundreds injured, many critically. This campaign of intimidation has increased since Yasir Arafat allegedly renounced terrorism.

■ In the few cases in which fuller coverage of the conflict was attempted on t.v., such coverage usually did turn out to be more "show-biz" than serious reporting. ABC's reportage "Six Days Plus Twenty Years" was so blatantly anti-Israel in tone that Arab countries rushed to use it as a propaganda film. Peter Jennings on ABC insistently perpetuates the odious comparison of Israel with South Africa. T.V. interviews with people in the territories invariably show reasonably middle class intellectuals and professionals with whom the American viewer can identify—never the arsonists, the bus bombers and the throwers of Molotov cocktails. The occasional Israeli spokesman that gets trotted out is almost always a member of the radical left or of the so-called "Peace Now" movement, quite unrepresentative of mainline Israeli thinking.

The media do not give the "intifada" fair coverage. It's partly the sheer volume of the coverage, which gives this minor regional conflict perceived importance that it doesn't have. It also lies in the persistent anti-Israel slant that permeates the reporting in all media. Finally, the media, almost without exception, focus on the immediate "drama" and do not explore the history and background of this conflict. The most important point, always omitted, is that the conflict between Israel and the "Palestinians" is not the core problem in the area. The core problem is the unremitting obsession of the Arab states to destroy Israel, their refusal to make peace with it, or to lift the economic boycott against Israel—regardless of what disposition may ultimately be made of the "West Bank." Israel, more even than other beleaguered pro-Western nations, is the target of disinformation and unfair reporting. Largely because it is a dependable friend and ally of the United States, the Jewish state is another victim of the "blame America first" bias in the media.

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Has anyone seen the common reader?

The Treason of the Critics

BY IRVING HOWE

Few aspects of recent literary life seem more important than the loss of faith, perhaps even interest, in the idea of the common reader. Most literary people now live and work in universities, and not many of these still write for the common reader. It sometimes seems almost as if that figure has been banished, at least in the academic literary world, as an irritant or intruder, the kind of obsolete person who still enjoys stories as stories and still supposes that characters bear some resemblance to human beings.

"I rejoice," wrote Dr. Johnson in his life of Gray, "to concur with the common reader: for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must finally be decided all claims to literary honors." As tantalizing as it is famous, this remark has occasioned an abundance of scholarly investigation, much of it illuminating, almost all of it scrupulously inconclusive. Did Dr. Johnson really know who this common reader was? Did he have in mind a distinct social group, or did the common reader serve as an emblem, a shorthand convenience, for the Augustan belief that the culture of England was still bound by shared understandings? Or was the common reader simply a mask behind which Dr. Johnson could deliver his authoritative judgments?

Eighteenth-century scholars can locate with fair accuracy, if not through quantitative weightings, the publics for which Dr. Johnson wrote in his own and other periodicals. There was evidently a small remnant of the aristocracy and the gentry with cultivated tastes; there were prosperous members of the commercial classes, part of a new reading public reaching out for breadth of cultivation; and there were literary people of indeterminate social standing. Especially noteworthy, remarked Dr. Johnson, was the growing number of women readers. But it seems clear that he did not see, indeed could not see, the common reader as we might.

IRVING HOWE is working on a book about the novel titled *Selected Short Subjects*.

James Basker, a scholar of 18th-century English literature, has written that Dr. Johnson's common reader should not be seen as "a single entity. . . . [Dr. Johnson] imagined many different kinds of readers. . . . Within a given work he would vary his rhetorical register to address now one group, now another, at moments perhaps all together." This varying of the "rhetorical register" is, of course, a common practice among journalists; and Dr. Johnson was, among other things, a journalist. Another scholar, Clarence Tracy, believes that what Dr. Johnson saw in the common reader was "the basic man," that generic figure "who was so much the preoccupation of 17th- and 18th-century thinkers," though in practice Dr. Johnson "seems often to have thought of [the common reader] as belonging to the lower middle class, to the vulgar, a word that he defined in the *Dictionary* as 'the common people.'" And in the eyes of still other scholars, Dr. Johnson's common reader simply referred to someone who read for pleasure, without a friend to boost or a cause to promote.

What can we conclude from this pleasant haze? That what mattered most to Dr. Johnson was a negative trait: the common reader was not a professional, not a university man, and usually had no Latin. Perhaps also the common reader was partly a creature of desire, a postulated figure made to represent some widely shared sentiments of a culture.

By the time Virginia Woolf picked up the term, the common reader had acquired a more precise social physiognomy. Woolf had in mind a community of literate persons who were not, in the narrow or professional sense, literary. They were drawn to, and held by, literature, but they did not stand within literary life. The common reader had also begun to suggest ambitious young plebeians eager to claim their portion of the cultural heritage; real-life versions, say, of Jude Fawley or Leonard Bast, the sort of people Woolf would have met at the evening educational institutes for working people at which she occasionally (and uneasily) lectured.

Woolf was not without a touch of condescension toward the very reader whom

she placed in the forefront of her audience. He "differs from the critic and the scholar. He reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others." By the time Woolf was saying these things, she and her Bloomsbury friends may have begun to suspect that the common reader was slipping out of sight, just as the paragon figure of the man of letters was. Neither of these could withstand the increasing professionalization of literary life that began around the First World War.

From the more advanced literary circles of the time, there emerged the verdict that the common reader and the man of letters had sealed a pact in behalf of a genteel amateurism, the decline of literary criticism into impressionist chatter. Pound and Eliot were among the outstanding figures who wrote as if the premise of the common reader had been pretty securely overturned. Was not this figure, or the notion behind this figure, a barrier in the way of the new, the revolutionary innovations of literary modernism? Modernist literature, by its very nature, could attract only a specialized readership, and a readership narrowing into those who steadily "worked" on it—this last, of course, an exaggeration, but not a pointless one. (The common reader could hardly be expected to devote a lifetime to the study of Joyce's fiction in order to satisfy the demand that Joyce made for such attention.)

Still, in the United States as late as the 1950s, many of the leading critics, both New and New York, continued to take seriously the idea of the common reader. Meanwhile this protean, elusive figure had undergone a change. For the *Partisan Review* and *Kenyon Review* critics, the common reader now signified a small audience of non-specialist people: say, university teachers in the social sciences and humanities, scientists interested in culture, left-wing politicals of some cultivation, students hoping to become writers, and so on. These critics wrote as if they still had readers other than other critics, as if there still were people who turned to critics for illumination while keeping an optimal distance from those noisy disputes in which critics seem fated to indulge.

Such readers of the 1940s and 1950s were likely to follow Clement Greenberg on the new painting, Eric Bentley on the theater, James Agee on film, Randall Jarrell on poetry, Edmund Wilson, Philip Rahv, and Lionel Trilling on the novel, as well as reviewers like Robert Fitzgerald, Marius Bewley, and Dwight Macdonald. These readers had, by now, probably read Eliot's poems and essays, which had gained academic respectability and were

being taught in the colleges, and they were also reading Hemingway and Faulkner, among American writers, and Joyce, Proust, and Mann, among European. But they were decidedly not interested in the writings of the Chicago neo-Aristotelians, or in the "heresies" and "fallacies" unearthed by some New Critics.

Just as Dr. Johnson had shifted his "rhetorical register" because he knew (or sensed) that he wrote for a variegated public, so the contributors to the major quarterlies of the time were prepared, no matter which "school" they adhered to or kept apart from, to accept a division between topics that mattered to their small but crucial public (really uncommon common readers) and topics best left to graduate seminars. As I recall, there was certainly a touch of anti-academic prejudice in these literary circles, but it was neither pervasive nor inescapable.

The more clever among the critics, aware that there was no single kind of common reader, that the category actually covered a span of figures and interests, tried to direct their work to both outsiders and insiders, amateurs and professionals, sometimes in alternation and, when really ambitious, simultaneously. I doubt that many common readers kept turning eagerly to John Crowe Ransom's *Kenyon Review*, with its few thousand readers forming a public no larger, proportionately, than the 500 of Dr. Johnson's *Rambler*. But at least some of Ransom's contributors, though writing for and quarreling with one another, also shared a desire to reach some portion of the publics we designate as common readers. I recall conversations among admirers of R. P. Blackmur's criticism who were distressed at the increasing opacity of his later work: Who but themselves (and even then . . .) would try to make it out? Difficulty was accepted as necessary at times, but obscurity not. Almost every critic would have agreed with Allen Tate's remark that "critical style ought to be as plain as the nose on one's face."

If the quarterlies could at times also put off many common readers with their internal debates and mandarin styles, there were still the book pages of the political weeklies in which the New York critics appeared. A few of the New Critics did also, very occasionally; but some of those I knew wanted to, and regretted their seeming inability to write in a way that would be at once serious and accessible. It was then generally assumed that the line of great English critics, from Dr. Johnson and Hazlitt to Arnold and Eliot, had cultivated, as a matter of course, a

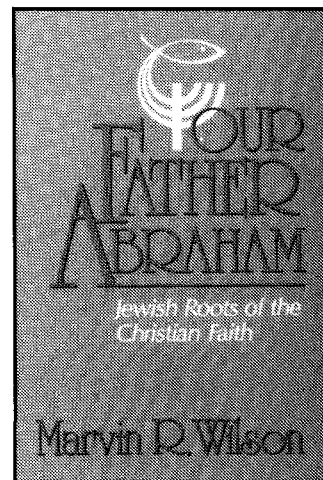
certain journalistic bent (critics often *had* to be journalists) and that the migration of critics to the universities that began in the early 1950s, while a practical advantage, was still a somewhat uncomfortable development. Surely in the history of American literary life, this was a major turning point. The new circumstances of our economy made it close to impossible for a free-lance man (or woman) of letters to survive. And this change must be one of the major reasons for the shift in attitudes toward the idea of the common reader.

Let me propose the hypothesis—it could be tested adequately only in a comprehensive cultural history—that in the years between the two world wars there occurred a fracturing or proliferation of literary publics. There were now perhaps more kinds of common readers than ever before, ranging from the few who saw themselves as devotees of the literary quarterlies to those who read magazines like *Harper's* and the dreary *Saturday Review*. And somewhere in between was the *New Yorker*, with at least a portion of its readers interested in cultural criticism.

After the Second World War, as gifted writers like Edmund Wilson, W. H. Auden, Dwight Macdonald, and Mary McCarthy began to appear in the *New Yorker*, it became harder still to make clear or sharp distinctions among common readers. Perhaps one distinction that still holds is that the literary quarterlies and political weeklies involved their readers in intellectual exchange and debate, or at least opened their pages to such exchange and debate, while the *New Yorker* presented the work of its contributors as finished products, not as something open to scrutiny through question or polemic within a community of letters. The kind of common reader who took the *New Yorker* was, in that capacity, a consumer. The kind who read *Partisan Review*, the *Nation*, the *NEW REPUBLIC*, and later the *New York Review of Books* was now and again a participant in an ongoing life of cultural exchange. This distinction is not an absolute one, since it seems probable that at least some readers of the quarterlies and weeklies took on the role of passive consumer quite as the readers of the *New Yorker* did. But the point to be stressed here is that radically different views of the life of culture were reflected in the divergent attitudes toward controversy between the quarterlies and weeklies, on the one hand, and the *New Yorker*, on the other. Even when the *New Yorker* printed something as deeply controversial as Hannah Arendt's work on Eichmann, it would not print any refutations or commentaries.

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It's possible, of course, that the idea of the common reader, from the time of Dr. Johnson to our present moment, was mostly an enabling hypothesis that enticed critics into exegesis and lucidity. But it must have been more, too: there were people I knew in the American socialist milieu who, often somewhat shyly, immersed themselves in Proust, Kafka, and Eliot. Especially in recent decades, when the great works of literary modernism were still fresh, and it had not yet become the dubious custom to minimize their difficulty, even learned and sophisticated people, some of whom rather foolishly looked down on critics like Edmund Wilson, could profit from the kind of exegesis and lucidity he exemplified.

Thus, even if the common reader was a contrivance of critics to satisfy their desire for an audience other than fellow critics (and I don't think it really was such a contrivance), the *idea* of the common reader served a useful purpose. At least during the first decade or two after the Second World War, there were critics who kept one eye on the reader outside the classroom. All of them, while naturally concerned with the responses of their colleagues, still wanted to reach someone "out there," one kind of common reader or another.

But things have changed radically in the last decades. There now flourishes an academic community of younger, accomplished, and, as it appears, self-assured professors of literature for whom the idea of the common reader seems to be of small interest. Such professors are likely to regard the common reader as an indulgence of an earlier generation of literateurs that resulted mostly in ephemeral journalism. Today most of the ambitious and talented young people within the literary academy publish only in journals read by their colleagues, and they seem to find this an acceptable, indeed a normal, condition.

I was just about to use an unfriendly phrase, "within the narrow confines of the literary academy"; but that would no longer be quite accurate. Those "confines" are no longer narrow. The American university system has expanded so rapidly that it's possible for aspiring professors to feel that their colleagues *do* form a sufficient audience. And in a way, they do: an audience that is attentive, self-absorbed, and with a vocabulary of its own. Give a paper at the Modern Language Association on Heidegger or de Man and you will probably enjoy a larger and more responsive audience than if you write about Ashbery's poems or Naipaul's novels in a literary magazine.

Why are literary academics so keenly drawn to purely "theoretical" theory? It

is a question that could take us far afield, but since it has a bearing on my topic, I offer a few quick speculations. There has been a growing tendency toward internal specialization in all academic fields, and this holds true for the literary academy as well. Each guild, or guild of guilds, lives absorbed in its own rituals, norms, disputes. There has been a general decay of strong beliefs, if not ideologies, among the intellectual classes; and the sophisticated skepticism, sometimes slipping into nihilism, that now dominates literary theory seems made to order for the mood of the moment. And then, to be fair, there are some powerful minds at work in literary theory who naturally win over younger people (who, decades before, might have been converts to earlier theories, earlier schools).

What results is a conviction that the literary theorist, rid of the grubby tasks of practical criticism and not obliged to pay very much attention to literature itself, can find satisfying expression by remaining within the academy, speaking to fellow theorists, and not having to worry about that nuisance, real or imagined, known as the common reader. The freewheeling literary intellectual of an earlier day, reaching several audiences and coping with a number of subjects, is all but gone. Our literary academics stay academic to the last, or to the last theory. And they find it good.

To avoid misunderstanding, I should say that it seems entirely appropriate for scholars to publish mainly in scholarly journals. So it has been, so it should remain. But when it comes to literary people who teach in universities and are not exactly or primarily scholars, the tendency to turn inward is disheartening. It means that the teaching of literature falls increasingly into the hands of people who lack a vital relation to, or strong feeling for, the writing of the moment, into the hands of professors for whom Hélène Cixous is more interesting than Nadine Gordimer and Jean Braudrillard more important than Milan Kundera. It means that literary academics, or at least some of them, are inclined to a mild—and not always mild—condescension toward those critics who still find it desirable to review novels and books of poetry. And what is quite as disturbing: a snobbish disdain for students who prefer to read novels and poems.

One reason for the inward turn of literary academics may be that recent American writing has not been especially "great." But "great" is a loaded word, and writers to whom it can be applied don't appear every day. There *are* interesting American writers, some talented and many serious, perhaps no fewer than

at other times; and it's hard to envision a vigorous culture in which some of the most influential and the most talented literary people pay little attention to living writers. True, the academics of the 1920s and 1930s, when the United States could boast of a major literature, weren't greatly concerned with living writers, either; but in those days it hardly mattered, since good critics flourished outside the academy, grouping themselves around such magazines as *The Dial* and *Hound and Horn*.

The very idea of a literary culture, one that would encompass the literary academy but not be confined to it, has now come into question. Which brings me to another, perhaps central, question: What happens to the idea of a democratic culture, advanced by almost every major American critic since Emerson and Whitman, if the increasingly powerful and self-assured literary academy, barely challenged by critics outside its walls, remains aloof from the larger culture, remains content to live and work within its own space?

To hope for a democratic culture, we need not cherish earlier populist or Marxist notions about the masses. The vision of a public spiritedly and independently engaged with literature has always been a precarious, if also a precious, one. Whoever thinks back to the vulgarities and the buffooneries of the recent presidential campaign knows it would be foolish to indulge in high rhetoric about the prospects for a democratic culture (perhaps even for a democratic politics). Clearly the decline in the public of informed, discriminating, yet non-specialized readers—or, more likely, the decline of concern with that public among academic literary people—has not been caused by recent trends within the academy, though it may have been hastened by them. The spreading blight of television, the slippage of the magazines, the disasters of our school system, the native tradition of anti-intellectualism, the cultivation of ignorance by portions of the counterculture, the breakdown of coherent political and cultural publics, the loss of firm convictions within the educated classes—these, in merest summary, are among the reasons for the decline in both the presence and the idea of the common reader.

And yet the idea of a democratic culture, which must mean a culture that extends beyond the academy, is one that we cannot afford to surrender, not if we remain attached to the idea of a democratic politics. Indeed, it's hardly within our power to abandon such ideas, so deeply rooted are they in the traditions of this country. Emerson asked for "confidence

in the unsearched might of man. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of a household life, are the topics of the timè." Whitman spoke for those "within whose thought rages the battle between democracy's convictions and aspirations, and the people's crudeness, vices, caprices." Toward the end of this wretched century it's hard to summon the buoyant tones of Emerson and Whitman; but we remain, with whatever modulations, their cultural offspring, whether we acknowledge it or not.

The inward turn among literary academics has not been accompanied by a large-scale or explicitly reactionary politics, such as several decades ago was being advanced by Eliot and Pound. What flourishes in the academy now is a craft elitism, expressed at times as a readiness to look on the large society as incorrigibly debased, or to dismiss it as inconsequential. The academy, it seems, is enough.

Sometimes this self-satisfied acquiescence even comes with assertions of radicalism. A number of those drawn to deconstructionist theory, for example, feel that their writings have political implications, though that does not lead them, so far as I can tell, to any visible politics available in the United States. A small academic group describes itself as Marxist, but that strikes me as a bit comic: whatever Marxism may have been, it always saw itself attached to, or in search of, a mass movement of the working class. It was not merely a "method" for literary criticism. But Marxism has gone to the universities to die in comfort.

It is true that the idea of a democratic culture remains, historically, a novelty not fully tested, and may even turn out to be no more than an attractive yearning. It may refer to several aspects of literature or the literary life. We may have in mind the dominant voices or ideas of a literature, so that we can speak of a democratic culture even with regard to writing (some of Melville, some of Henry James) that has little popular appeal, is alienated in spirit, and sets itself up as an adversary to the society's dominant values. In that somewhat restricted sense, we have had a democratic literature since the days of Emerson, and probably into, or close to, our own time.

But the idea of a democratic culture may also refer to something more ambitious and difficult: to the relations between writers and an active, autonomous public, neither academic nor professionally literary, perhaps small, but providing writers with a flow of sentiment and response. The odds against maintaining

a vital link between a literary community and a literary public are pretty high these days. If we cannot locate the common reader, however, we must try to help him/her/them reappear. Critics might

learn once more to speak to the common reader, as if he still matters, as if she will soon respond; and to speak in English, a language that for some time served criticism well.

Foreign investment won't destroy us—or save us.

America for Sale?

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

At times it seems that America is being bought up by foreigners. British media baron Robert Maxwell has purchased Macmillan, the publisher. In California, Japanese investors own five of the ten largest banks. By 1990 Japanese carmakers will be able to assemble two million cars and trucks in North America. In 1987 Grand Metropolitan of

Actually, much less than meets the eye. The specter of America being taken over is just that—a specter. By now, it's a cliché to say that our economy is becoming more international. The rise of foreign investment is merely the latest chapter in this story. It has prompted more hype and hoopla than it warrants. The United States won't become a second-rate economic power owned and operated by foreigners. But neither will foreign investment be our salvation. It won't magically ignite faster economic growth or create lots of additional jobs. Because it seems new, people see it as more threatening or promising than it actually is.

Consider first some statistics. It's true that foreign ownership of American companies, factories, buildings, and land has risen rapidly. Between 1980 and 1987 it grew 215 percent to \$262 billion and may soon surpass similar U.S. investment abroad, \$309 billion in 1987. But the United States is a big and wealthy place. Foreigners still own less than one percent of American farmland and, despite concentrations such as downtown Los Angeles, about the same of all real estate. In 1986 foreign-affiliated companies employed less than four percent of the U.S. work force and about nine percent in manufacturing. By these measures, the foreign presence is modest.

Indeed, the statistics overstate reality, because they classify as foreign any company where a single international investor owns ten percent or more of the stock. So Du Pont, for example, is the largest "foreign" company in the United States, because the Canadian Bronfman family owns 23 percent of its stock. Almost no one, however, would consider Du Pont Canadian. There's a larger lesson here. In the popular mind, foreign ownership connotes foreign influence, as if American interests and values are always replaced and destroyed when a property passes into foreign hands. Sometimes this happens, but

The New Competitors: How Foreign Investors Are Changing the U.S. Economy

by Norman J. Glickman
and Douglas P. Woodward
(Basic Books, 336 pp., \$19.95)

The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914

by Mira Wilkins
(Harvard University Press, 992 pp., \$65)

Selling Out: How We Are Letting Japan Buy Our Land, Our Industries, Our Financial Institutions, and Our Future
by Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins
(Contemporary Books, 384 pp., \$19.95)

International Direct Investment: Global Trends and the U.S. Role
1988 Edition

(U.S. Department of Commerce, Government Printing Office, 196 pp., \$9.50)

Britain bought Heublein, which sells Smirnoff vodka and Inglenook wine. More recently it bought Pillsbury. In downtown Los Angeles foreign investors own more than 200 office towers, roughly half the office space. Hardly a week seems to pass without the announcement of a major new foreign investment. What's going on here?

ROBERT J. SAMUELSON's columns on economic affairs appear regularly in *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other newspapers.

typically the truth is less dramatic.

Foreign owners and investors are often indistinguishable from American. Exactly what can foreign landlords do with American office buildings? Take them home? Increase the rents? If rents rise too high, tenants will move elsewhere. Similar practical considerations apply to ownership of U.S. companies and factories. If foreign owners can't satisfy American consumers or work effectively with American employees, then the investments will probably flop. The same rule-of-thumb also works in reverse: although foreign investments can help our economy, they can't perform miracles. American living standards and competitiveness will mainly reflect the education levels, work habits, business acumen, and technological competence of Americans.

Somehow these common-sense views have gotten lost in the controversy over foreign investment. *The New Competitors* offers a generally sober antidote to the exaggerations on both sides of the debate. Norman Glickman and Douglas Woodward correctly view foreign investment as a part of world markets, characterized by huge international flows of trade and technology. Exports aren't the only way companies go global. And they invest abroad for many reasons: to create local distribution networks; to hedge against protectionism; to get closer to customers; to cut production costs; and to understand foreign technologies.

After World War II, American companies—least hurt by the war and possessing the most advanced products—led multinational growth. As late as 1970 American multinationals accounted for about half of all worldwide foreign direct investment. Since then, foreign companies have rapidly raised their overseas investment, reducing the U.S. share to about a third. Much of this new investment has occurred in the United States. European and Japanese firms had developed appealing products and technological advantages. They had also become rich enough to afford to invest in America, the world's largest and wealthiest market. Any company with global aspirations wants to be here.

As Glickman and Woodward show, foreign investors clearly do a lot of good. They introduce new technology, products, or management approaches. In the early 1970s Michelin helped bring radial tires to the United States. Joint ownership of U.S. steel plants by American and Japanese firms has meant an infusion of advanced steel-making technology. Foreign investment (as well as imports) also intensifies competition, resulting in im-

proved efficiency and products. Autos are the best example. Even foreign acquisitions of U.S. companies can increase competition by strengthening weak American firms. Plessey, the British electronics company, revived an ailing U.S. telecommunications firm, Stromberg-Carlson.

But foreign investment doesn't help all Americans at all times. One frequent claim—that it creates or saves jobs—is almost certainly false. Of course, when Honda built its plant in Marysville, Ohio, it increased local employment. One community's gain, though, may be another's loss. A superior new plant may force a less efficient or older plant elsewhere to close. Nor are foreign investors always expanding. Germany's Tengelmann Group revived A&P, the supermarket chain, but did so by selling 600 unprofitable stores. The competition that ultimately improves the economy is not painless. There are losers along the way. But this has always been true. Foreign companies and investors don't automatically create additional turmoil.

The more Glickman and Woodward examine the differences between U.S. and foreign owners, the fewer they find. When a big American company wants to get into a new market, it typically buys an existing company. Not surprisingly, so do foreigners. More than nine-tenths of recent foreign investment has involved buying existing U.S. firms as opposed to building new factories. (The Japanese are something of an exception. Perhaps half of their investment involves new plants or plant expansions.) How do wages compare between U.S. and foreign-owned companies? In similar industries, they're roughly equivalent. This is to be expected, because foreign-owned and American companies compete in the same labor markets.

Some management practices vary, but differences tend to fade with time. When foreign practices are superior, they're adopted by U.S. competitors. Many American manufacturers now use Japanese inventory control methods. When foreign management techniques consistently are resisted by American workers, there are strong pressures for foreign managers to back off. "Many foreigners try not to seem 'different' from American firms, but like [U.S.] firms operating abroad . . . , want to blend in and not be seen as foreign," write Glickman and Woodward.

In contrast to this balanced assessment, Douglas Frantz, a reporter at the *Los Angeles Times*, and Catherine Collins, a former reporter at the *Chicago Tribune*, provide an alarmist—almost hysterical—overview of rising foreign investment,

especially from Japan. According to them, the country is surrendering its economic and political sovereignty. The Japanese are particularly threatening for two reasons. First, their investment is rising more rapidly than that of other countries. And second, the Japanese are different. They are more determined to dominate American industry and less sensitive to the social disruption they cause.

These anxieties aren't entirely baseless. Japanese investment is increasing faster than that of other countries. Since 1980 it has grown at an average annual rate of 32 percent, reaching \$33 billion by 1987. The Japanese now stand behind only the British (\$75 billion in 1987) and the Dutch (\$47 billion), who took decades to amass their present positions. Moreover, because Japanese businesses tend to imitate each other, they do concentrate in certain industries or localities. Once Honda invested successfully in the United States, other car companies followed. The same pattern has occurred in electronics, machine tools, and steel.

But it's a great leap from saying the Japanese are different to concluding that they're taking over the United States economy. Critics say that American workers will fare poorly under Japanese employers. American managers won't rise to positions of responsibility, which will go to Japanese. Lower-level workers will be regimented. Maybe, but these are open questions. One study indicates that Japanese companies spend far more on training workers than comparable U.S. firms. But if American workers are alienated, Japanese companies may founder. Good midlevel managers will quit and go elsewhere. Other workers will resist management. Disgruntled women have already filed sex-discrimination suits. Employing a tiny fraction of the labor force, Japanese companies face strong pressures to adapt to American ways.

Criticism of Japan is a moving target. A few years ago Japanese companies were attacked because they would only export to the American market and wouldn't produce locally. Now that they're doing that, the Japanese are criticized for creating only lower-paid assembly jobs while higher-paid engineering, design, and management jobs are left at home. If—as seems inevitable—Japanese companies do more research and development work here, they will be accused of exploiting U.S. technology and stealing scarce American scientific and engineering talent. Japanese companies are doing now what American companies did in earlier postwar

decades. Americans see that as a political as well as economic threat, just as Europeans once saw American multinationals as a political danger.

In fact, Japanese political power in the United States is more smoke than fire. Japanese interests contribute to congressional campaigns, hire lobbyists, and sponsor academic research. But how much power they get in return is unclear. Frantz and Collins cite the lobbying campaign last year to prevent Congress from slapping trade sanctions on Toshiba for illegally selling advanced machine tools to the Soviet Union. (Because the machinery could be used to make quiet submarine propellers, the exports were prohibited under rules adopted by the United States and its major allies.) "In all the 21 years I have been in public office," Republican Senator Jake Garn of Utah said later, "I've never seen a lobbying campaign so orchestrated at so many levels."

But Congress imposed sanctions anyway, restricting the imports of the subsidiary that sold the machine tools. Because other Toshiba imports weren't barred—cutting the estimated sales loss to \$300 million from a potential of \$2.5 billion—Frantz and Collins consider this a Japanese victory. By this standard, the Japanese have enjoyed repeated political victories. The Reagan administration was pro-Japanese, but it took many trade actions against Japan. Restrictions resulted on imports of Japanese steel, autos, machine tools, and some electronics products (the last was in retaliation for Japan's alleged violation of an agreement to import more U.S. semiconductors). For all its Washington connections, Japan is more criticized by American politicians than any other U.S. ally.

No one should be surprised that foreign investment has been sensationalized. It has happened before. In the 19th century foreign investors periodically favored the United States, and the reaction was much the same—a mixture of suspicion and enthusiasm. "American soil is for Americans, and should be exclusively owned and controlled by Americans," the New Hampshire legislature stated in a resolution in 1885. At the same time, many Americans favored foreign investment as the path to more personal wealth or economic development. In 1887 Congress passed a law restricting alien ownership of land in U.S. territories (but not states), prompting this outcry from a newspaper in the then-territory of New Mexico:

The unmixed Jackass from Illinois, who fathered the alien act in the House of Representatives, probably had as much notion

of what he was really doing, as he has of the red spot on the face of Jupiter. The mining industry in the Territories has been largely fostered by foreigners, and hundreds of mines which would have been sold this year will now go without purchasers perhaps for years, because a windy demagogue from Illinois, backed by a sufficient number of similar frauds from elsewhere logrolled through Congress in its closing days a bill of which they knew neither the scope nor effect.

The present may not turn out much different from the past. By 1914 the

United States was the world's largest debtor nation. Its overseas debt totaled about \$7 billion, equal to about 20 percent of the economy's output (gross national product). On balance, the impact was beneficial, as Mira Wilkins argues in her exhaustive review. About 60 percent of the foreign money—much of it from Britain—helped finance a fivefold increase in railroad trackage between 1875 and 1914. In turn, this fostered industrial growth by lowering transportation costs and creating bigger markets. Aside from developing U.S. mines, foreign in-



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vestors also introduced new technologies and products. German companies were an important force in the American chemical industry.

Becoming a debtor nation in the 19th century allowed Americans to increase their national spending temporarily by raising imports. If foreign investment is used productively, everyone benefits. The borrower is better off and can repay from increased income. The creditor makes a good return. This is generally what happened, though not always. What drew foreign funds were higher U.S. interest rates and promises of higher profits. These greater returns meant greater risks. In 1876 two-thirds of European holdings of U.S. railroad bonds were in default. Swindles occurred. Mines (again) were a popular scam. Shrewd Americans sold mining claims to gullible foreigners at inflated prices. If the claims proved worthless, the U.S. promoters vanished. Present parallels seem likely. Already there are stories of foreign buyers paying exorbitant prices for American real estate.

Of course, foreign investors tried to influence U.S. politics. But the overall

impact was "inconsequential," Wilkins judges. Generally, foreigners could be effective only with American allies. Foreigners also lacked power, because their funds went primarily into "portfolio" investment—that is, into U.S. stocks or bonds as opposed to "direct" investment, which is outright ownership of companies or land. The same is true today. In 1987 foreign investment in the United States totaled about \$1.5 trillion. With direct investment at \$262 billion, most of the rest was in stocks, bonds, and banks deposits. Owning these assets implies even less political or business control than in the 19th century. The \$1.5 trillion compares with total national wealth estimated at nearly \$21 trillion in 1987.

It's a widely believed myth that foreign direct investment—again, companies, factories, or land—results automatically from the huge U.S. trade deficits. Overspending Americans (the theory goes) send more dollars abroad than they earn. Foreigners then use those dollars to buy U.S. corporations and hotels or to build new factories. By this logic, every year the United States runs a trade deficit of

\$100 billion or so, foreigners will buy that much more of America. Plausible as this sounds, it's mostly wrong. Focusing on the trade deficits allows critics to blame Ronald Reagan for increased foreign direct investment. In fact, the rise of foreign direct investment mainly reflects the expansion of international business and is not mechanically related to American trade deficits.

Suppose Toyota wants to build a U.S. factory. It needs dollars for construction. As a creditworthy company, it can borrow the dollars from a bank or raise them by selling dollar bonds. Or it could buy dollars with yen on foreign exchange markets. None of these transactions requires the United States to send dollars abroad through a payments deficit or for Japan to earn dollars through a payments surplus. In the 1970s foreign direct investment in the United States increased rapidly even though the U.S. current account (the trade account plus other current international spending, such as travel) was roughly in balance. Obviously, the surplus dollars we've sent abroad have been recycled—but mainly through portfolio investment. If the

U.S. trade deficits ended tomorrow, foreign direct investment here would probably continue to rise.

Fortress America was more a state of mind than an economic reality. We were never as self-sufficient as we thought. Now even the aura of invulnerability is disappearing. What can or should we do about rising foreign investment? Not much. Of course, we shouldn't take a completely laissez-faire approach. Foreign ownership should be prohibited or limited in companies vital for national security. Excessive foreign ownership would be worrisome in some key sectors, such as commercial banking. In a crisis, foreign owners might be less responsive to American political leaders. The president and various government agencies already have some power to reject foreign investments in these circumstances. In the future, more power may be needed.

It's also important for other nations, particularly Japan, to accept American investments and corporate acquisitions. Formal and informal barriers exist. When foreign investment here was modest, differences in treatment didn't matter much. It was hard for Americans to complain when all the investment was flowing in one direction. Now, both the commercial and political climate has changed. If U.S. companies are restricted abroad while foreigners can operate easily here, Americans will object. And they should: as competition becomes more global, trade and investment are increasingly interconnected. If foreigners want the U.S. market to stay open, they will need to make sure their markets are open.

But we can't assure our economic sovereignty—a charged but vague term—by tightly regulating foreign investment. Indeed, severe restrictions could backfire by causing a collapse of international confidence in the dollar. One reason that foreigners are willing to hold dollars is that the United States remains an open economy. If that perception changes, it's hard to predict the reaction. Restrictions are also unlikely to be effective. Multinational companies seek new markets. If prevented from investing, they will expand in other ways: through more exports, joint ventures, or licensing arrangements. We live in a global economy, and legislative fiat can't change that.

Technology is mobile, because once something is sold around the world, customers learn how it works. Companies routinely move production among plants in different countries. The emergence of global markets mainly reflects improvements in transportation and

Heedless

Perhaps we love the shore
because the debris here could not be ours
no matter how hard our lives.

Or because the long shelf of land
continues on under the water
so even here at the edge

of the world the edge is uncertain.
Perhaps we love that the water rises
to uncertain levels leaving

and returning. We may love
the shore as we love the madwoman
who repeats the same phrase

endlessly, as we love the dying
who go on living, the traveller
who promises return.

Here, just here, we leave
no mark. Spume renders footprint,
castle, cry the same.

It's all the same
what we say to the traveller,
the dying, the madwoman:

come back, I love you, come back

PENELOPE AUSTIN

communication that have made it less expensive to produce and sell around the world. These changes have been going on for centuries. The first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable opened in 1866, and a 20-word New York-to-London cable cost \$100; today there's instant communication among the world's major cities. Between the early 1800s and 1900s a trans-Atlantic voyage dropped from six weeks to six days; now, it's hours.

The American challenge is to come to grips with these changes, not to deny them. Foreign investment is one way of doing so. Frantz and Collins tell an interesting story of a small Ohio plastics company that wanted to do business with Honda's new plant. In three years the U.S. company spent \$200,000 sending test samples to Honda. Finally, it got an order—for \$216. But once Honda was satisfied that the company was a reliable

supplier, business exploded and the company got introductions to other Japanese companies. If American firms can't learn how to do business with Japanese firms in the United States, what are the chances of selling to Japanese companies in Japan?

We can't meet global competition by staying isolated from it. Americans would like the United States to regain its former economic superiority and self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, these goals are at odds. Competition forces American companies to do better. Retreating from worldwide competition is a formula for economic mediocrity. The two great powers (the Soviet Union and China) that kept to themselves now recognize their mistake and are trying to rectify it. Economic markets now transcend political borders. We can't undo that, unsettling as it may be.

not to saddle future generations with the costs of their follies, Madison was more concerned to recognize the debt that the present owed to the past, the inheritance by the living not only of material improvements in the land but also of political improvements in the institutions that protected freedom. The Constitution was an expression of this generational bonding. It was an agreement among generations as well as among regions. The success of the United States depended, in Madison's view, on its commitment to this agreement. In disputes over particular clauses he did not hesitate to summon up the original intent of the Founders (as-expressed in the state ratifying conventions) in order to defeat what he regarded as violations of that intent by a later generation of legislators.

The terms of the constitutional agreement were not wholly static. The Constitution provided means for its own amendment, but Madison was generally reluctant to resort to amendments, for fear of reducing the reverence that the document must command in order to overstay momentary popular passions. He was willing to recognize, on the other hand, a kind of long-range legislative reconstruction of the Constitution, whereby legislation that he originally considered unconstitutional became sanctioned by long acceptance. The Bank of the United States, which he and Jefferson originally opposed on constitutional grounds, fell within this category. In 1831, as Andrew Jackson was about to veto a bank bill on grounds that Madison would have embraced in the 1790s, Madison phrased his support of the bill in terms that would have pleased Edmund Burke. "Let it, then," he said,

be left to the decision of every intelligent and candid judge, which, on the whole, is most to be relied on for the true and safe construction of a constitution; that which has the uniform sanction of successive legislative bodies, through a period of years and under the varied ascendancy of parties; or that which depends upon the opinions of every new Legislature, heated as it may be by the spirit of party, eager in the pursuit of some favorite object, or led astray by the eloquence of popular statesmen, themselves, perhaps, under the influence of the same misleading causes.

Madison's adherence to this philosophy often surprised his friends. As president he eloquently urged on Congress the need for internal improvements, especially a national road and canal system. But when Congress obliged with a bill for constructing roads, he vetoed it as unconstitutional; internal improvements did not enjoy the sanction of long-standing legislative precedents, and Congress had failed to note Madison's caveat that the "defect of constitutional

The Founding Conservative

BY EDMUND S. MORGAN

The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy by Drew R. McCoy

(Cambridge University Press, 384 pp., \$29.95)

W as the creation and adoption of the Constitution a conservative, "Thermidorean" reaction against the radical democratic forces unleashed by the Revolution? In one way or another, most historians from John Fiske to Gordon Wood have seen it as such. By implication at least, James Madison, the father of the Constitution, has emerged as a conservative of sorts; but his association with Jefferson and his key role in the building of the Jeffersonian Republican opposition have obscured the profoundly conservative character of his thinking. By focusing on Madison's later years, Drew McCoy has given us a brilliant analysis of Madison's conservatism, and of the way it operated in his reactions to the issues of his day. More important, he has shown how those issues emerged from the Constitution itself, as the conflicts it subdued grew too strong to be contained within the political framework it furnished.

Madison, McCoy shows us, was much less ready than his friend Jefferson to see society and government as the product of a simple agreement among the living. He agreed that the people were the ultimate sovereign and that the majority

must be the ultimate wielder of sovereignty. In a republican government there could be no way, in the end, to prevent a determined and persistent majority from acts of injustice toward a minority. The advantage of republican government was that a majority would be less prone to injustice than an aristocracy or a monarchy. And a constitutional republican government could reduce the likelihood of injustice still further.

Madison's formula (in the tenth Federalist) for preventing unjust majorities by extending the republic geographically is well known: in a large republic, difficulties of communication and the variety of interest groups would impede the formation of any majority devoted to a single selfish interest. Any policy on which people in widely separated geographical regions could agree was unlikely to be oppressive. But Madison, as McCoy demonstrates, wished to blunt the power of the majority by extending the republic in time as well as space. The Constitution, as Madison saw it, was a compact that bound the living to the dead as well as to one another.

Where Jefferson liked to insist that the earth belongs to the living, who ought

authority" would have to be rectified by an amendment before Congress could act. Given his coolness toward amendments in general, the backers of the bill can be excused for their bewilderment. By Madison's own philosophy it could have been argued that legislative sanction for a dubious interpretation of the Constitution was preferable to amendment. It had to begin somewhere; and where better than in undertaking the internal improvements that the president himself had endorsed? But Madison, for whatever reason, did not see it that way.

Madison surprised his friends again when he declined to support the challenge offered by Virginia and South Carolina to the protective tariff in 1828. Recurring to the debates in both the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 and the state ratifying conventions, he demonstrated that protective tariffs had clearly been envisioned by the Founding Fathers and been passed by previous Congresses. Their constitutionality had thereby been doubly established; and however inexpedient a particular tariff might seem to a particular region, its constitutionality was out of the question.

When John Calhoun later led South Carolina to the brink of secession over the tariff, it appeared to many that he was following Madison's lead in the Virginia Resolutions of 1798 against the Alien and Sedition Acts. But Madison was quick to point out that the Virginia Resolutions merely sought the support of the other states for a general agreement to declare the acts unconstitutional. The South Carolina "nullifiers," on the other hand, were on a novel and dangerous course, in effect appealing to a natural right of revolution that would destroy the constitutional compact and thrust the country into the sort of anarchy that had threatened it in the 1780s.

McCoy leads us through the complex reasoning by which Madison sought to resolve the public problems of his later days by recurring to the principles that had guided the creation of the republic. While some of that reasoning could be classified as casuistry, Madison was not

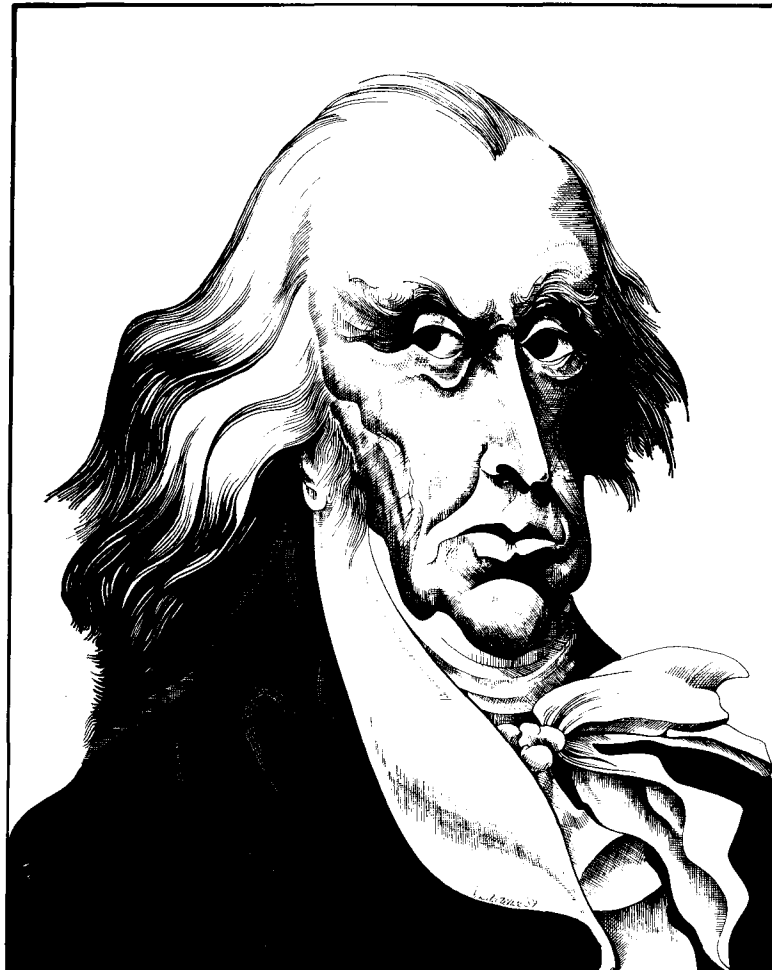
simply a reactionary. He was a true conservative. He sought the stability that attention to the past could bring to present problems. His assertion of the constitutionality of protective tariffs rested not only on the consistency of his political philosophy, but also on a recognition of the changing economy of the country.

In the 1790s Madison had joined Jefferson in extolling the yeoman farmer as the repository of republican virtue and of economic and political independence, as opposed to the factory hand, whose economic welfare and political posture were

Convention, Madison had foreseen that the most potent source of conflict within the United States lay in the differing ways of life of the North and the South. The difference could be stated in terms of agriculture as opposed to commerce and manufacturing; but the real rub was the South's dependence on slave labor.

The Convention achieved compromises that protected Southern slaveholding in a republic dedicated to freedom. Both Madison and Jefferson themselves lived from slave labor. How freedom for whites could be reconciled with slavery for blacks was a question that no one at the time wanted to examine too explicitly. Suffice it to say that neither Jefferson nor Madison was comfortable with the knowledge that his own freedom, and that of his white friends, depended in some measure on denying it to others who were equally entitled to it.

Madison lived with the discomfort more uneasily than Jefferson, but he lived with it; and the feebleness of the efforts he made to relieve it, for himself and for the nation, reveal how deeply rooted slavery was in the compact that created the republic. Madison never ceased to regard slavery as an unmitigated evil, but his application of constitutional principles led him to support measures that would continue to make the United States safe for slaveholders. When the question arose of prohibiting slavery in the territories, which the Constitution placed under the direct government of



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

subject to the caprice of customers and the iron will of employers. By the 1820s, as the European market for the farmers' produce shrank and the burgeoning American population spread into the fertile lands of the West, the yeoman farmer proved at least as vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the market as the manufacturer. And he looked forward to such a diversion in his native Virginia and even in South Carolina, a diversion that would eliminate the controversy over the tariff.

But beneath that controversy lay a more deep-seated and more intractable problem than would yield to Madison's wishful thinking. At the Philadelphia

Congress, he decided that the empowering clause did not authorize Congress to deprive slaveholders of the right to bring their property to the territories. And, perhaps to ease his conscience, he subscribed to the specious theory that the diffusion of the evil by spreading it over a larger area would somehow dilute it and make a future abolition easier.

If Madison hated slavery, his hatred never reached the passionate intensity that informed his crusade against religious intolerance. His only concrete proposal for doing away with slavery altogether was colonization: the export of manumitted slaves to Africa. Although

he specified that the slaves must themselves agree to the transportation, he thought, not without reason, that white prejudice (perhaps including his own) would bar them from joining in the sacred compact that protected the rights of their masters. If they were to be free, they must be free elsewhere.

In Madison's last years he watched other Southerners develop a line of thinking that had been implicit, but not quite acknowledged, in the republican political philosophy that guided him and his compatriots at Philadelphia. In 1833, three years before his death, he received from Thomas R. Dew, a young professor at William and Mary, a letter explaining all too clearly how black slavery supported republican freedom. In McCoy's words, Dew showed how slavery offered "a happy way of defusing dangerous conflict between a propertyless majority and a propertied minority; with blacks performing all low and menial tasks, the working class was removed from the political equation, and whites enjoyed a measure of equality that would otherwise be impossible."

Madison recoiled from this reasoning, as did his principal disciple, William Cabell Rives, whose career McCoy follows as a kind of coda to Madison's. At the time of Madison's death, when Rives listened to Calhoun praising slavery as "an essential ingredient in republican government," he could only denounce Calhoun's interpretation of the Constitution, reminding him that the Founding Fathers had never thought of contending "that domestic slavery was a positive good." Rives became a leading figure in Virginia politics and did his best to keep Virginia in the union, faithful to the sacred compact of his mentor. But by 1863 he was willing to make the explicit connection between slavery and freedom that he and Madison had once rejected. Writing to a Richmond newspaper, he acknowledged that

After the exhibition we have seen for the last twenty years of the operation of what is called free society in the northern states of America, he must be a blind and unreflecting man, indeed, who has not been brought to question the practicability of maintaining Republican Government, with universal suffrage, in any community where the system of domestic servitude does not exist.

The evil of slavery, it seems, was not only mitigated, it was justified, by its benefits to the republic of the free.

It does not follow that Madison, had he lived, would have reached the same conclusion. Where Rives was reactionary, Madison was conservative. But Rives's conclusion had been lying in wait

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ambiguities in the original Constitution of the world's greatest republic.

EDMUND S. MORGAN is Sterling Professor of History Emeritus at Yale University and the author most recently of *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (W. W. Norton).

Adventures in the Bomb Trade

BY LAWRENCE FREEDMAN

War and Peace in the Nuclear Age by John Newhouse

(Knopf, 512 pp., \$22.95)

Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years by McGeorge Bundy

(Random House, 735 pp., \$24.95)

As the nuclear age gets longer, so do the books that explain it. At one point it looked as if the story had a beginning, a middle, and an end; as if nuclear strategy had moved from its infancy in the 1940s, to its adolescence in the 1950s, to its maturity in the 1960s, and to its senility in the 1970s. Then there was a surge of immaturity in the 1980s, raising the alarming possibility that the debate might be wholly cyclical. Ronald Reagan's strange nuclear odyssey, as he moved from protracted nuclear exchanges to Star Wars to complete disarmament at Reykjavik, left a curious and awkward legacy for the more orthodox Bush administration.

Reagan has a lot to do with the current interest in nuclear history. The sudden rediscovery of nuclear danger at the start of the 1980s, brought about by the coincidence of high-profile decisions on new weapons with a marked deterioration in East-West relations, prompted new studies of the awfulness of nuclear war and of the origins of our predicament. These two books are products of that uneasy time. McGeorge Bundy provides a masterful survey of nuclear policy-making; he tells a good deal about the overall flow of events while analyzing in remarkable detail some of the most critical choices that political leaders have faced. John Newhouse, in a book loosely linked to an excellent series of television documentaries, recounts

the major events lucidly and reflectively.

The enormous intellectual and political effort to solve the nuclear problem has been essentially unsuccessful, but the problem has so far proved to be less dire than supposed. The nuclear danger does not go away, but we keep on managing to survive it. Not surprisingly, there is a pressing interest in figuring out what it is that we have done right, and how we nearly went wrong.

The relevant period begins with the Second World War, within living memory, and so is relatively contained and remarkably continuous. The fundamentals of East-West confrontation, at least in Europe, have barely changed since the 1950s, though they may be changing now; and many of the key figures (Nitze, Kissinger, Gromyko, among others) have had careers covering much, and sometimes all, of the nuclear age. History is given a further boost by the American practice of moving in and out of government, and writing a substantial amount while "out," about what one tried to achieve when last "in" and what one hopes to achieve when next "in."

Both Bundy and Newhouse are former "insiders." They appreciate the political importance of personality, and of basic political skills. In their hands, the nuclear story comes across as a series of choices, more and less clearly understood, shaped by varying combinations of short-term calculation and long-term philosophy.

The value of "insiderhood" for the writing of history has never been more clearly demonstrated than by Bundy's elegantly written and meticulously researched book. There is no self-serving revisionism here. He brings to the subject an extraordinary acquaintance with American government and the American political establishment. He understands, for example, that in baffling matters the quality of the adviser will be more decisive for a president than the quality of the advice. He recognizes that political leaders have many things on their minds at any given time, that much depends on how, if at all, they become linked. As a former writer of memos, he knows how to decode them, observing what has been left out and drawing attention to the constituency to which the memo is really addressed. He is aware that government itself can become a victim of excessive secrecy: when those who need to know are too few, decision-making becomes insular and compartmentalized.

Bundy begins by asking why the Americans built the bomb first. It is not enough to point out that the United States was the only country with the necessary motives, know-how, resources, and invulnerability to attack; the machinery of government still had to be galvanized into action. He discounts the importance of Einstein's famous letter to Roosevelt, and puts more emphasis on the impact of the results of the earlier British investigations as they filtered through to the United States during 1941. But for the war, the bomb probably would not have been built: Bundy makes the intriguing point that until 1939 it was France that was in the best position to exploit the new discoveries in nuclear physics, but this would have been largely for civilian purposes.

About the bombing of Hiroshima, Bundy continues to believe that the bomb was dropped in order to shorten the war, and not for any other ulterior motive; and that in this task it probably succeeded. (These were his views as an infantry officer expecting to help invade Japan, and then as a scribe to Henry Stimson in the preparation of his memoirs.) He now disagrees about the extent to which the alternatives to a surprise attack on an essentially civilian target (however dressed up by reference to military bases or factories) were seriously considered. He explores the possibility, for example, that international observers might have been invited, for cautionary purposes, to the first test in New Mexico—which might have meant that word could get to Tokyo to help Japan interpret the cryptic warnings from the Allies concerning the terrible consequences of

a failure to surrender.

Bundy's most original contribution to the study of Hiroshima comes with his analysis of the structure of official decision-making. The monumental nature of the decision—morally, and in its implications for postwar cooperation and the immediate issue of Japanese surrender—deserved more than cursory and belated treatment. He criticizes the intense secrecy that surrounded the project, which meant that all the issues converging in the middle months of 1945 were never properly addressed (particularly the question of the future of the Japanese monarchy, since the two officials instrumental in offering assurances to Japan on this score did not know of the bomb). Roosevelt gets low marks for his attachment to secrecy, and his haphazard way of conducting business; he delayed the discussion of many critical issues until he was pushed into it by Churchill, who had his own agenda on these matters. Bundy is perhaps too confident that a more enlightened policy would have emerged had there been a full, properly staffed discussion, but he is surely right that it ought to have taken place.

One of the best chapters in this book analyzes the futile postwar attempt to establish international control over atomic energy. Bundy shows that the best became the enemy of the good: the attempt to eliminate the weapons completely precluded a search for a less ambitious but more realistic system of control. This was a consequence of American complacency about Soviet prospects and an inability to understand Great Power psychology, which meant that Stalin *had* to have a bomb. He notes the lack of real negotiation: positions once stated became fixed but there was no real bargaining—the discreet words in the corridors, the private letters between foreign ministers, the helpful intermediaries—that characterize truly serious discussions between adversaries.

As Bundy progresses through the three succeeding decades, the lack of comparable documentation limits his discussion of some of the later periods. He moves, as he notes, from writing as a historian to writing as a commentator. During the transition period of the first half of the 1960s, he can draw on his privileged position as a participant observer. The greatest drama of this period came with the Cuban missile crisis, and it is worth examining what he has to say about this.

Not only is Bundy able, with judicious self-criticism, to clarify his own role, but he also brings to bear his knowledge of the personalities and processes. John McCone, director of Central Intelli-

gence, understood Khrushchev's motives best because he shared the Soviet leaders' conviction that nuclear superiority made a difference. The more liberal officials failed to appreciate Khrushchev's anxiety to redress the gap that had been developing in the strategic balance as the missile programs initiated by Eisenhower surged ahead of the faltering Soviet program; they also failed to appreciate the sincerity of his concern that the United States would follow the failure of the Bay of Pigs with a more direct attempt to topple Castro, although nothing then was further from Kennedy's mind. The most telling point against the air strike options, which Bundy had been charged with developing, was that nobody could write as good a speech for Kennedy to announce an air strike as Sorensen could to announce a quarantine.

He explains the two Soviet messages on October 26 and 27, 1962, Friday and Saturday—the first private and conciliatory from Khrushchev, the second public and less so—by the sheer delay in transmission and translation of the first. This meant that a response in kind from Washington was simply not available when Khrushchev had to consider his next move with colleagues. Bundy also speculates that the original delay on the Soviet side might have been a form of diplomatic sabotage by an opponent of concessions to the United States.

Lastly, Bundy clarifies the position on the trade of Jupiters in Turkey for the Cuban missiles. Only 15 Jupiters were involved. Kennedy thought they should have been removed, but he had not actually ordered this to be done (*pace* his brother's account). Khrushchev had seized on them as a face-saving device, although the number of missiles involved in Cuba was much higher and he clearly had not taken his gamble simply with a view to removing the Jupiters. Kennedy *was* prepared to remove the missiles to avoid war, but he was mindful of the implications for NATO, and especially Turkey, if it looked as though he had sold his allies out. So he agreed to Dean Rusk's proposal that Khrushchev should be given an oral assurance that the Jupiters would be leaving but that this could be no part of a formal deal. The formal quid pro quo was a promise not to invade Cuba. It now appears, however, that Kennedy was certainly prepared to consider a formal trade on the Jupiters if that had been the only way to avoid war.

The Cuban missile crisis has itself gone through successive reinterpretations, as we learn about such matters as

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the Jupiter trade. Bundy's is by no means the last version. The gravity of the crisis (and the fact that the Kennedy administration emerged in a generally good light) has encouraged many memoirs and numerous post-mortems by veterans reminiscing about one of the high points of their careers. Now joining in the reinterpretations are the Soviets, thanks to *glasnost*, which has led to a serious interest in the history of the nuclear age in the U.S.S.R.

Our understanding up to now has been unavoidably one-sided, colored by the Western view of the rights and wrongs of the crisis and skewed by the dearth of reliable Soviet material. But in January 1989, after both of these books had been written, a conference of participants—including Soviets and Cubans as well as Americans—took place in Moscow. This confirmed some of the facts of the affair—that Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin had not been told of the installation plan, that 20 warheads did reach Cuba. It also became clear at the conference how much real fear there had been of an American invasion of Cuba. It now transpires that there were four times as many Soviet troops based on the island as had been previously thought (some 40,000).

Such revelations have prompted a debate among American participants about whether there really was any serious interest in invading Cuba. Documents have recently surfaced relating to a covert "Operation Mongoose," concerned with destabilizing Castro's regime, as well as contingency plans for an overt invasion, which were activated during the crisis. These belated discoveries, and the questions they raise, ought to warn of the difficulties of learning from history. We do not always know history as well as we think we do. Bundy's account alerts us to some of the inherent uncertainties and complexities of policymaking that no organizational chart or structural reforms can ever overcome. Strategists are used to talking of the "fog of war" on the battlefield: the phrase is less often applied to national capitals.

At the close of his survey of the history of the nuclear age, Newhouse quotes Eliot, "We had the experience but missed the meaning," in commenting on the persistent failure of governments to take the measure of their security dilemmas. But he wisely counsels against turning to the narrow specialists—the "nuclear priesthood"—for enlightenment. Even if he exaggerates the importance of the specialists (perhaps thanks to his own experience in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the Ford and Carter administrations, when it was one

of the major targets of the priesthood), Newhouse is right in criticizing their role. Their contribution, he argues, has been to encourage "shrill and polarized" rather than "sober and balanced" debate.

The priesthood has encouraged the view that international order depends on nuances of the strategic balance. Because this view is hard to refute—except by experiments that political leaders are understandably loath to undertake—the nuances have been assigned an exaggerated importance. In the end, nuclear policies themselves provide only a limited vantage point from which to view the evolution of the nuclear age.

The real problem is that while the story of nuclear weapons runs like a thread through contemporary international history, it is only one thread, and not always the most important one. My own guess is that nuclear decisions were of critical importance during the first decade after the Second World War. The potentially revolutionary postwar environment was stabilized by evidently revolutionary nuclear power. But during the 1960s, especially after Berlin and Cuba, the postwar world settled down. We moved toward the first détente, the consequences of which are still felt in Europe. While nuclear weapons continued to play a stabilizing role, there was gradually less to stabilize.

Before the advent of calm, however, there was a surge of anxiety among many strategists that a nuclear stalemate would be inimical to stability, either because it would remove the inhibitions surrounding conventional war, or because there were possibilities for technological breakthroughs that might allow for a first strike. Working through this anxiety, as kept a large collection of strategists in gainful employment for a number of decades. But their efforts over time have become more and more remote from political reality, except when they have been used to bolster positions adopted for essentially domestic political reasons, as was the case during the campaign against Jimmy Carter's SALT II treaty.

Indeed, nuclear policies themselves have become dependent, rather than independent, variables. They gain their salience from processes set in motion elsewhere. The current debate in NATO over short-range missiles tells us much more about the emerging shape of post-cold-war Europe and the resulting tensions in West Germany than it does about how best to meet the requirements of nuclear deterrence. It is only by keeping an eye on the broader historical process that we can keep the fearful nuclear issues in proper perspective.

LAWRENCE FREEDMAN is professor of war studies at Kings College, London.

Feature Fictions

BY TOM LECLAIR

If the River Was Whiskey by T. Coraghessan Boyle

(Viking, 224 pp., \$17.95)

T. Coraghessan Boyle has published six books in the last ten years, and they haven't been 3/8-inch volumes. *Water Music* and last year's PEN/Faulkner award-winning *World's End* are thick, expansive, and inventive novels that required historical research for, respectively, their 19th-century African picaresque and colonial New York family chronicles. *Budding Prospects*, though smaller in size and subject, has in its comic account of a year-long marijuana growing project in Northern California the verbal vigor and caressed details of Boyle's longer novels. The 17 stories in *Descent of Man*, his first book, and the 15 in *Greasy Lake* are heterogeneous in situa-

tion, jagged in form and style. While the decade's minimalists were describing trailer-park lives and psoriasis of the soul, Boyle was building a considerable reputation telling tales about Mao swimming, an endless baseball game, and the beggar master of Sivani-Horta.

Like his other collections, *If the River Was Whiskey* ranges beyond the American ordinary: two stories are set in Latin America, one in Ireland, another in Iran. Characters include the famous (the Devil and the Virgin Mary, Hemingway's Robert Jordan, a woman who lives with apes) and the eccentric (a Hungarian daredevil, members of a Polar Bear club, several deranged homeowners). Most are third-person narrations, but Boyle lets

several of his people have their say: a Chilean student of Derrida reports an import-export scheme, a Woody Allen talent agent recalls the daredevil.

All of the stories first appeared in our best general magazines (the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*), in leading literary quarterlies (*Antaeus*, the *Paris Review*, *Granta*), and in reputable glossies (*Playboy*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*). This range of publication could signify Boyle's talent and accomplishment: stories so powerful and artful that editors who wouldn't lunch together want to publish them. But I don't think so, because I can't tell the stories apart, can't distinguish the *Granta* story from those in *Playboy*. What the array signifies, instead, is the collapse of the high (or relatively high) literary into the popular in periodical publishing. Boyle is no fool. Beneath the variety of *If the River Was Whiskey* is a consistency of method that identifies and places the stories but limits them, pulls them toward the occasional, the journalistic.

Three-fourths of the stories here are what I'll call "feature fictions," sometimes imaginative, often witty, and once in a while sophomoric developments of newspaper material, daily life. The Ayatollah's "lizard eyes" inspire a parodic narrative by a p.r. man called in to soften the old demon's image. AIDS anxiety leads to a story about a woman who invents the full-body condom. Brokers' greed generates a rewrite of the Faust compact with securities replacing knowledge. Nicaragua is a good place to send a punk version of Robert Jordan.

Boyle also reads the back pages, where oddities, desires, and fears flourish. "The Miracle at Ballinspittle" seems inspired by recent reports of a weeping religious statue in Chicago. Even Dear Abby would have difficulty advising Boyle's women victimized by a hellish adopted child in "King Bee" and a violent adopted ape in "The Ape Lady in Retirement," an update of "Descent of Man." The real estate and home-security boom in Southern California gives Boyle a setting for drama in "The Sinking House" and "Peace of Mind," stories in which yuppie safety is violently penetrated by the elderly and poor.

The newspaper restaurant review even provides Boyle the source for the artistic parable, "Sorry Fugu," that introduces *If the River Was Whiskey*. When chef Albert D'Angelo opens a new restaurant, he says he wants the tougher of the paper's two critics to rate his food. He gets his wish, but the WASP reviewer, Willa Frank, seems disappointed during her first two visits. After Albert manages to distract her thick-palated companion, who likes only steak and potatoes, Willa visits the

kitchen, samples the variety of Albert's food, and then confesses to having enjoyed fugu at another restaurant: she likes the way the Japanese fish numbs her mouth, because she has been unsure of her taste and afraid to praise the kind of rich and lovingly cooked food that Albert serves.

I have an appetite for just the kind of story that "Sorry Fugu" implies Boyle is purveying this collection. But unlike Albert's dishes, Boyle's stories are not always made from scratch or painstakingly prepared. Beginning with media material, Boyle sometimes simply inverts it for broad comic effect, as in "The Little Chill," which describes a reunion of lumpish high-school classmates. Or Boyle predictably plays out an initial absurdity, as in "Modern Love," where a prospective lover is dismissed by his disease-conscious girlfriend because of a minute health risk in his family.

Most of the stories are about menace—disruptions of the ordinary by the animal or the holy, by the crazed old or crazed young—and they are peopled by persuaders: agents, sellers, teachers, a seducer, a minister, a screenwriter. Boyle's devil is a "born closer." Fast-talking characters give the fictions richness, but too often Boyle borrows their hyperbolic expression to microwave a story's events or significance. It's Boyle, not some submerged narrator, who says a set of triplets is "twice as destructive as Hitler's Panzer Corps." Given this kind of stylistic exaggeration, one understands why Boyle's favorite trope for menace is the horror movie, the fugu of popular culture.

Several of the stories based on more direct observation of human exchange seem to have demanded more care from Boyle, an understanding and development not filtered through the media. Though less exotic than the Feature Fictions, "Thawing Out," about a floating young man who fears the weight of his Ukrainian girlfriend, and the title story, about a young boy and his burned-out guitarist father, have off-center characters, the menace of emotional engagement feared or exhausted, and a language that does not overheat the situations they present.

In "Sorry Fugu," Boyle suggested that he welcomed the demanding critic. The icy Willa was seduced by the courtly Albert, but I'm less charmed, maybe more hard-boiled. Boyle is best in his novels, where he has to burrow into the material he makes up and where his exuberant language and the book's mass balance each other. If Boyle's stories are not as ingenious as Donald Barthelme's or as

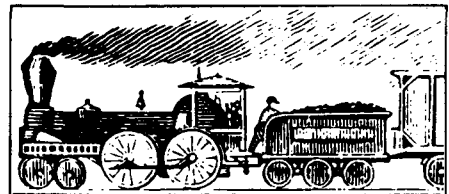
suspicious of popular culture as Robert Coover's, Boyle is smarter and funnier than Max Apple—of the writers with whom Boyle is compared. In *If the River Was Whiskey*, though, Boyle seems content with productive self-replication. Editors are happy to have these stories. After all, they validate the media as source and inspiration. What I miss at this stage of Boyle's successful career—at least in his stories—is exploratory risk: the experimental extravagance in *Descent of Man* or the elaboration of life that gives *World's End* its weight.

TOM LECLAIR, who teaches at the University of Cincinnati, is the author of the forthcoming *The Art of Excess* (University of Illinois Press).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

George," May 8). Actually, of course, it was John Adams who nominated Marshall to head the Supreme Court in 1801. What's next? Are you now going to tell us that George actually did cut down that cherry tree?

BROOKS D. SIMPSON
Spartanburg, South Carolina



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Nervous Tics

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT SUMMER might start without a major terrorfad coming on line (à la the Skylab tumble of '79, last year's skin cancer alert, etc.), *Newsweek* put a grotesquely enlarged photo of a deer tick on its May 22 cover and warned the nation about the coming scourge of Lyme disease. Please understand: I know that Lyme disease, unlike the shadowy Epstein-Barr virus, is undeniably real. Even so, only 5,000 Americans got it last year—that's a whopping victim percentage of approximately 0.002—and it's concentrated mainly in a few Northeastern and upper Midwestern states. (A Washington area pest-control expert, the aptly named Dr. George Rambo, tells me that, tickbite-wise, I still have more to fear from Rocky Mountain spotted fever.) Even so, cover stories in national newsmagazines are powerful paranoia inducers, and this one crawled right up my pants leg. "The name is Lyme disease," it warns, "and the time to catch it is right now—possibly in your own back yard." Carried by a tick almost too small to be felt or seen ("Look for a freckle that moves," one health official chillingly advises), the non-fatal affliction may, in its late stages, cause "arthritis, heart arrhythmias, facial palsy, severe headaches, and loss of sensation," but in its beginning stages it can be "impossible to detect." One of the early warning "signs" is that versatile Epstein-Barr symptom: fatigue. Thus, it won't take much hypochondriacal imagination to fret about this one. In fact, excuse me a second while I fog my apartment with Tick Garde and scratch what I hope is a phantom itch.

WHEN WOODSTOCK'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY loomed in the summer of 1979, promoters promised a 72-hour reunion concert followed by an official concert LP, a major motion picture, and mountains of related crappy trinkets. Most of that fell through because the promoters couldn't find a concert site, but as this August's 20th anniversary approaches, rumblings are being heard again. In a recent cover story that was, in its way, every bit as alarming as the Lyme spread, *Adweek's Marketing Week* reported on the plans shaping up this time around. Even if Woodstock III becomes Fizzle II, the arti-

cle warns, Woodstock will be in your face a good bit this summer, via feel-good-by-association advertising. Mateus wine, for example, has made a spot in which "a chic woman looks into a glass of the wine, musing, 'It was passed around Woodstock,' as hands giving peace symbols are superimposed on the glass." Now, I can live with false nostalgia (which it is: if it were true nostalgia, the woman would say, "Then I passed out, and then I was passed around Woodstock"), but this sort of thing is awfully hard on those of us who, while officially baby boomers, were too young to enjoy and/or be responsible for classic '60s happenings. As a result of our end-of-the-boom birth placement, we catch it from both ends. This summer our older brothers and sisters will condescendingly say we don't appreciate Woodstock because we "didn't live it," while young adults right behind us will forget that we didn't live it and include us in their mass class-action loathing of marketers' ongoing willingness to cater to the delusional whims of ex-flower children. Just for the record, young people: adults who are now between the ages of 27 and 33 were between the ages of 7 and 13 in 1969. (I was 11, and I spent that summer rebelling against my Little League coach's orders not to swim on game days.) So from now on, leave us out of these disputes.

RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES (see, I *do* care about your needs) should take a hint from an unsuccessful cover letter and résumé I just obtained—after unsuccessful negotiations with its author's public-relations staff—by using the Freedom of Information Act: John Denver's 1982 application for a berth on the Space Shuttle. NASA, as everyone knows, nixed him. Later, the p.r.-hungry Soviet Union did too, in effect, by "accepting" him with impossibly strict conditions. The Soviets said he would first have to pass a set of rigorous requirements, including forking over a fairly stiff application-processing fee: \$10 million. All of which hinted to me that Denver's package must have been a bit off-putting. It was. He committed the two cardinal entry-level résumé errors: overperkiness in the cover letter and overlisting of dumb Achievements and Awards. After a classically Denverian salutation to NASA administrator James Beggs ("Congratulations to you and the entire NASA team on the successful completion of the Space Transportation System's Orbital Flight Test Program!"), and after listing his "hard" qualifications (Denver is a Lear Jet pilot and fitness buff), he went on for seven pages about himself, listing every conceivable honor. "1979, U.S. Jaycees: 'Ten Outstanding Men of America' Award." "Fall 1981, Speech at Club 20 in Aspen." "Earl D.

Osborn Award for outstanding [television program] excellence on the subject of aviation." At one point Denver, like an English major hoping to bull his way into medical school, had to explain how all this stuff related to Shuttle worthiness, and here he went orbital. "I am known all over the world, even in China . . . I want people . . . to feel a connection with what has been done up there and what there is yet to do for the benefit of all. It touches so many of the problems that we are dealing with in our world today and in a most positive way . . . I want to do whatever I can to improve the quality of life on this planet for all people."

ONE MAN WHO SUCCEEDED IN getting a job he was unsuited for is ex-Klansman David Duke, who was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives in February. Since then I haven't been hearing much Dukeiana, so I checked up on him last week. Thus far Duke has kept a (relatively) low profile while he tries to learn the ins and outs of the legislature. His legislative aide says he's spending a lot of time on the floor listening to speeches and opening letters (unlike most freshman state legislators, Duke gets letters and dollars from philosophical soulmates in all 50 states). Duke got some press in April by joining the successful opposition to Governor Buddy Roemer's tax plan, which would have cut some business taxes and raised taxes on Little Guy items such as cigarettes and gasoline. Aside from that, Duke has been making his trademark smartass statements (he told a group of visiting African editors that the Ku Klux Klan's hooded costume was meant to promote "anonymity in doing good works") and introducing frivolous bills, most of which pick on that modern demon class, public-assistance recipients. One bill would require drug testing for recipients of public-assistance benefits. Another would tack on bonus years in prison for drug offenders who offend on public-housing property. And so on. I called Duke at his desk on the House floor, and he said his next push will be in environmental areas. He wouldn't give specifics, but I assume he will come down hard on public-housing chimneys. The concern caused by Duke's eerie election was justifiable, but then again, there's also the theory that the safest place for someone like him is in a state legislature. These august bodies have a long and honorable history of letting buttheads expend lots of energy with no discernible result.

ALEX HEARD

ALEX HEARD is a free-lance writer in Washington.



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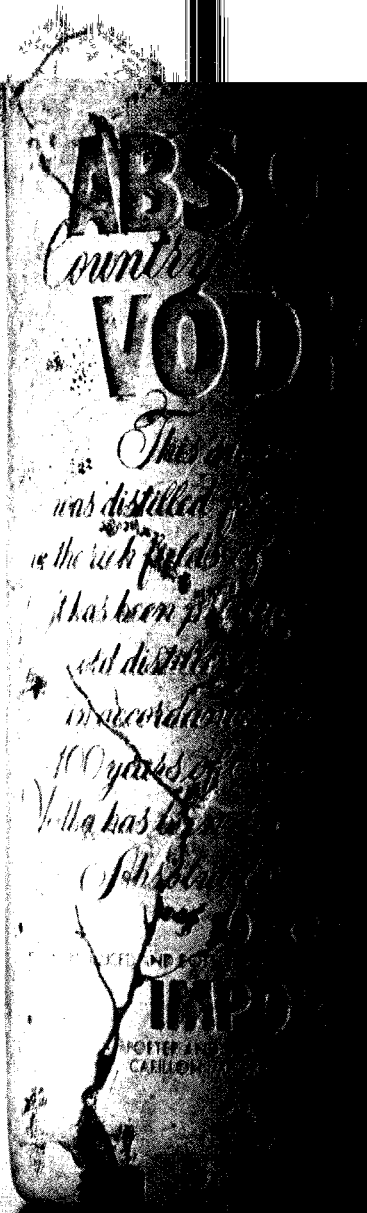
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